MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J, LANE COUNTY, OREGON

February 4, 2009

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a regular board meeting at 7 p.m. on February 4, 2009, at the Education Center, 200 North Monroe Street, Eugene, Oregon. Notice of the meeting was mailed to the media and posted in the Education Center on January 30, 2009, and published in The Register-Guard on February 2, 2009.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:
Charles Martinez, Jr., Chair
Yvette Webber-Davis, Vice-Chair
Eric Forrest
Craig Smith
Alicia Hays
Jim Torrey

STAFF:
George Russell, Superintendent of Schools and District Clerk
Tom Henry, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer
Carl Hermanns, Assistant Superintendent/Chief Operating Officer
Barbara Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Communications Director
Susan Fahey, Chief Financial Officer
Caroline Passerotti, Financial Analysis Manager
Celia Feres-Johnson, Director of Human Resources
Jon Lauch, Director of Facilities Management
Laurie Moses, Director of High School Services
Carmen Urbina, Parent, Family and Community Coordinator

MEDIA:
KRVM

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:
Ryan Broadsword, Churchill High School
Lizzy Monroe, South Eugene High School
Linda Gai, IHS, All Campuses

CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND FLAG SALUTE

Board Chair Charles Martinez called the meeting of the School District 4J Board of Directors to order at 7 p.m., noting that Board Member Beth Gerot would not be present. Dr. Martinez led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA REVIEW

There were no changes to the agenda.
INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Superintendent George Russell introduced Lisa Vreim, co-chair of the Eugene Education Association Minority Affairs Committee, who also works as a physical education specialist at Howard Elementary School. Ms. Vreim introduced the winners of the annual Martin Luther King, Jr., essay and poem contest, who included Samantha Schuttpelz of Meadowlark Elementary School, James Gerhart of Kennedy Middle School, and Hannah Hynes-Petty of South Eugene High School. Ms. Vreim said the theme of the competition was “Dr. Martin Luther King fought hard for human and civil rights and now the United States of America has elected its first African American president, Barack Obama. How do you think Dr. Martin Luther King paved the way for this historic election to happen?”

Mr. Gerhart was present and read his winning entry to the board and audience. Superintendent Russell thanked Mr. Gerhart and commended his essay.

Superintendent Russell called the board’s attention to the agenda for the Budget Committee meeting on February 9, 2009.

COMMENTS BY STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Ryan Broadsword, filling in for Mallory Bray, reported that Churchill High School was holding an Asian Celebration assembly later that week and a dance after the upcoming basketball game on February 4. He reported that the contestants had been selected for the school’s Mr. Lancer Pageant, which was a fundraiser for the Children’s Miracle Network. He said the school’s drama department was putting on the play “Once upon a Mattress,” and he encouraged people to attend. The school was also revamping its advisory program.

Lizzy Monroe said there was little to report on at North Eugene High School because of final exams. She said the Mr. Axeman Pageant, which was also part of the Children’s Miracle Network fundraising effort, was currently underway. Student government was selling “dial-a-grams” for Valentine’s Day. She said that a group of students recently came together to discuss the school’s internet policies.

Linda Gai of International High School reported that the school recently implemented an on-line International Baccalaureate History of the Americas course. The option gave students more flexibility as registration was voluntary and students could choose to attend class instead. Students would meet periodically for tests and group discussions and received the same credit as other students. She reminded people that IHS was open to any student who wished to apply and reviewed the lottery application process.

ITEMS RAISED BY THE AUDIENCE

Chris Valentine, Coburg, updated the board on the progress between the district and the City of Coburg in regard to the Intergovernmental Agreement, saying it was going fairly well because all involved recognized the importance of the children. His only concern was where the needed money would come from as the City of Coburg was experiencing financial difficulties and large private financial contributors were also in financial troubles. He anticipated it was possible the closure of the school could be raised again and that Coburg citizens would continue to advocate for the school. He pointed out that if closed, students would have to go to schools in completely different neighborhoods some distance down the road.
Nancy Willard urged the board to give positive consideration to the merger of Eastside and Harris. She said she was hearing positive reports about discussions regarding the merger and believed it would help sustain Adams. She expressed concern about the size of Jefferson in regard to whether it was sufficiently sized to support a comprehensive middle school program that the students expected.

Dina Valentine, parent of three children at Coburg Elementary School, spoke of her family’s positive experience at Coburg. She was concerned about proposals to eliminate teachers and said it was the district’s responsibility to have adequate teachers and reasonably sized classes. Neighborhood schools should have the same size classes as alternatives schools. She thought that four-day school weeks were overly disruptive to families with two working parents. Using school closures as a budget cut was a permanent solution to a temporary problem. She asked if the district would try to resurrect the school when the economy improved and the community grew.

COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Paul Duchin and Merri Steele, Co-Presidents of the Eugene Education Association, were present, but had no comments.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Receive the District’s Annual Report on Compliance with Oregon Minimum Standards

Annually, superintendents are required to report the district’s status with respect to the Standards for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools from OAR Chapter 581, Division 22. Deputy Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer Tom Henry prepared the Annual Report on Compliance with Oregon Standards and the district is in compliance. Mr. Henry provided a brief overview of the report and responded to board questions. A copy of the report was included in the board packet.

Responding to a question from Board Vice Chair Yvette Webber-Davis about the potential the district might have to postpone the adoption of the new math requirements, Mr. Henry said if the district decided to postpone math adoption, it would have to request a waiver, and the state would respond.

Board Member Eric Forrest referred to the possibility the district might have to seek a waiver for inclement weather. Mr. Henry responded that the inclement weather days did not impact the state requirements for instruction.

Receive the Superintendent’s Report Implementing Recommendations of Shaping 4J Related to Enrollment Management and Boundaries

As part of the approved recommendations in Shaping 4J’s Future, the board adopted several district-wide strategies for implementation. One was related to open enrollment and choice at the secondary level, while the other related to boundary adjustments. While these two actions are related, they were not meant to be interdependent. That is, they were not meant to be implemented together as a strategy for managing enrollment and choice.
The strategies approved by the board are listed below:

1. **Limits transfers for middle and high schools**
   Each middle school could accept up to 5 percent of the middle-school students residing within the boundaries of another region. No middle school could accept transfers that would result in a student enrollment that exceeded the middle school size maximum enrollment target of 600 students. Each high school could accept up to 7.5 percent of the high school students residing within the boundaries of another region.

   No high school could accept transfers that would result in a student enrollment that exceeds the high school maximum of 1500 students. IHS transfer students would be included in the 7.5 percent maximum; IHS transfer enrollment would be prorated to reflect the ratio of IHS students to regular program students in the receiving school.

2. **Boundaries**
   Staff will conduct a review of existing school boundaries in 2008-09 and make any suggested revisions by February 2009 for 2009-10. Key considerations when redrawing boundary lines shall include:
   - Keep bus route no more than 45 minutes, one way.
   - Current attendance area islands and optional areas should be reduced whenever possible and new ones should not be created.
   - Avoid creating schools with high concentrations of low-income families.
   - Keep geographically and historically defined neighborhoods together.
   - Consider the proximity of students to school when redrawing boundary lines, closing, or consolidating schools.
   - Minimize impact to current students and families, particularly those directly impacted by recent school closures and boundary change decisions.
   - Consider ways to “grandfather” current students attending schools affected.

Superintendent Russell provided the report. He invited questions and concerns, noting that the item was informational only.

Dr. Martinez asked Superintendent Russell to comment on the sibling issue. Superintendent Russell said the transition plan would allow for most siblings to enter the same school, at least at South Eugene High School, and some, although not all, students from Family School would also get into South Eugene, which he acknowledged was a concern for those families and for transfer students at Roosevelt who also assumed they would enter South Eugene. He acknowledged there would be disappointed students and families and thought that was unfortunate, but believed the district needed to roll back its school transfer policies and mitigate the impacts of the policy on district schools.

Mr. Forrest said he believed the work Superintendent Russell was doing followed closely the work the board did in Shaping 4J’s Future and that his recommendations conformed to the intent of what the board wanted to accomplish. He thought it was the right thing to do.

Board Member Jim Torrey was supportive of the recommendation. He asked Superintendent Russell to be prepared to report to the Budget Committee what he expected the financial assistance program for negatively impacted schools would be. Superintendent Russell recalled that the district had $500,000 to implement strategies and would want two FTE to work on the transition. He anticipated $200,000.
Superintendent Russell reviewed the proposed boundary changes. He again invited input.

Dr. Martinez expressed appreciation for Superintendent Russell's work. Superintendent Russell recognized the work of district staff. He said that it was possible he would re-think some of the boundary changes and he did not believe he would want to move forward with anything until the financial forecast was received on February 20.

**Receive a Legislative Report**

Barb Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Communications Director, provided the report, indicating that the budget outlook continued to be bad and many school districts were making reductions to their existing budget in response to decreased revenues.

Responding to a question from Mr. Torrey regarding the timeline for final budget decisions, Susan Fahey, Chief Financial Officer, said that the district was required to have an adopted budget by June 30, 2009, and often the legislature met beyond that time.

**ITEMS FOR ACTION AT THIS MEETING**

**Approve the 2009-10 Lane Education Service District Local Service Plan**

As required by House Bill 3184, Lane Education Service District has developed a Local Service Plan. The process in developing this plan included analysis of all resolutions/core services with the 16 component districts. Through this process component districts had the opportunity to gain knowledge, share, and discuss their needs and provide recommendations for the local service plan.

The Local Service Plan contains all services mandated by law. Those services are intended to: improve student learning; enhance the quality of instruction provided to students; assure equitable access to resources; and maximize operational and fiscal efficiencies. These services include:

1. Programs for children with special needs;
2. School Improvement services;
3. Technology support; and
4. Administrative services and other required services such as home school registration and truancy.

Copies of the Local Service Plan for 2007-08, the 2007-08 Summary of Services for Eugene School District 4J, and the Resolution Adopting the Local Service Plan were included in the board packet. The superintendent recommended adoption of the 2009-10 Lane ESD Local Service Plan.

Superintendent Russell reminded the board that it received the report in August. He reported that the superintendents of the affected districts met to review the plan. Nothing occurred during that meeting to change his recommendation that the board adopt the plan. He said that like the districts, the ESD would struggle to figure out its budget and there may be changes that impact its plan.

**MOTION:** Mr. Torrey, seconded by Dr. Webber-Davis, moved to adopt the plan.

**VOTE:** The motion passed unanimously; 6-0.
CONSENT GROUP – ITEMS FOR ACTION

Approve Grant Application—Beyond the Asphalt—An Outdoor Experience in Science and Technology

Staff from Kelly Middle School submitted a grant application to Wells Fargo for $8,000. The Kelly Middle School “Beyond the Asphalt” outdoor experience has been designed to provide opportunities for students to increase their understanding of the relevance of environmental science and technology and helping them make connections to the natural world. All activities will take place at the McKenzie River Conference Center for three days of intense learning and fun along the banks of the McKenzie River in the Willamette National Forest. The experience will offer students, many of whom rarely explore beyond the asphalt parking lot in their urban environment, an opportunity to participate in GPS navigation in a natural setting, study ecosystems, learn survival skills, and appreciate plants and wildlife.

The superintendent recommended approval of the grant application. A copy of the grant description form was included in the packet.

Approve Grant Application: Mounting Ceiling Projectors at Kelly Middle School

Staff from Kelly Middle School submitted a grant application to Qwest for $19,999. The project will mount 20 projectors on classroom ceilings at Kelly Middle School in addition to purchasing five new projectors. Currently, projectors are stored on mobile cars located in the center of the classroom. The carts store the projectors as well as other electronic equipment, which can be unsightly and present potential tripping hazards due to loose cords and wiring. Mounting the projectors on the ceiling will alleviate the safety hazard and free up workspace in the classroom.

The superintendent recommended approval of the grant application. A copy of the grant description form was included in the packet.

MOTION: Mr. Forrest, seconded by Board Member Alicia Hays, moved to adopt the consent items.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously; 6-0.

ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING

Approve Superintendent’s Recommendations Regarding the Middle School Alternative School Review Process

Board Policy IGBH: Alternative Schools directs the district to regularly review alternative schools and programs “in order to ensure that alternative schools/programs continue to meet board and district goals, and perform consistent with board policy and expectations.” In accordance with that policy, the district’s middle school alternative school programs were reviewed this past fall.

The district currently has five middle school alternative programs. Three of the programs are language immersion programs that provide the opportunity for students in the elementary language immersion schools to continue their intensive language studies in middle school. The French immersion program is offered at Roosevelt Middle School; the Japanese immersion program is offered at Kelly Middle School; and the Spanish immersion program is offered at Monroe Middle School. The fourth middle school alternative program, Family School, is also an
extension of an elementary alternative school and is offered at Spencer Butte. The fifth program, da Vinci, is a stand-alone middle school alternative program offered at Kelly Middle School.

Prior to proceeding with the formal review process, the district review team conducted a preliminary assessment with da Vinci and the Family School middle school program, during which both schools chose to forgo the formal review process. Da Vinci notified the review team that they intended to begin the process of merging with Kelly Middle School, in order to create a new, combined school that capitalizes on and maximizes the strengths and talents inherent in both programs. The Family School middle school program notified the review team that they proposed to begin the process of merging with the elementary Family School to create an integrated grade 1 through 8 Family School program beginning next year, and also hoped to add a kindergarten.

The formal review process for the three language immersion middle school programs took place in October and November, and consisted of a written response by each immersion program to the assessment criteria approved by the board, followed by a site visit by the district review team.

The review team determined that each of the immersion programs represented a distinctive educational strategy for achieving the board’s educational goals, and recommended no change in status for the programs. However, the review team did pose suggestions for the programs to consider, and recommended minor modifications in the Japanese immersion program.

A copy of the Middle School Alternative Program Review Report was included in the board packet. The superintendent recommended approval of the report’s recommendations.

Carl Hermanns, Assistant Superintendent/Chief Operating Officer, reviewed the recommendations and invited questions. There were none.

Dr. Martinez called for a five-minute recess.

**Receive Superintendent’s Recommendations Regarding Harris/Eastside Merger**

At the March 19, 2008 board meeting, the board directed Harris and Eastside to develop a school consolidation plan for consideration by the board no later than February 1, 2009. The board also requested that they receive a status report on the consolidation conversion in November 2008.

The following guiding conditions for consolidation were established:

- School will be one school with one administrative structure and instructional program/model;
- School will have one budget, one site council;
- Enrollment priority will be given to students from within the Harris neighborhood boundary, then South Region boundary and then all other students; and
- Both school communities commit to engage in this conversation with equal voice and to work in good faith toward a potential collaboration, recognizing that the stakes are equally high for both schools.
At the time, the superintendent suggested that if the board approved a Harris and Eastside consolidation proposal, then strategies to manage enrollment among elementary schools in the South Eugene and the Churchill region should be implemented in order to ensure that all schools have sufficient resources to offer strong programs and to address a diversity of student needs. These strategies might include setting a cap on each school’s enrollment based on building or program capacity and the need to balance student populations, a limit on transfers into a school, and/or boundary adjustments.

Over the course of the spring and summer, Eastside Alternative school moved from Parker to Harris. A new principal, secretary, and lead custodian were hired. Ten new teachers were hired between the two schools. During August and September, the staff focused on the start up of both schools at the co-located site. Conversations about the new merged school began in October and have continued with staff, parents and district facilitators. The schools provided a progress report to the board on December 3, 2008. Since that time, the schools have continued their work on a program proposal for board consideration. An update was included in the board packet.

Staff and parents from the two schools have made a sincere and dedicated effort to develop a proposal that had mutual support, that was intended to be based on best practices, and that would merge the two schools into one new school. The staff and parents have developed a more refined proposal laying out the proposed consolidation program and how it would work to meet the criteria previously established. Clearly, there appeared to be strong support and enthusiasm among those involved in the design and development of the proposal. The staff report supported the belief that the consolidation should go forth and that the board should approve the merger of Harris and Eastside as a new community school with the following instructional practices and programs as the backbone for the new school:

- The teaching staff will be working in teams as professional learning communities. Ongoing professional development for the teaching staff will be a key component of our program.
- Core - provide core instruction in the district’s language arts and math curriculum.
- Project Based Learning - teaching to strengths and interests with mixed age groups of students. Student projects will include community-based activities. Projects may vary in length and will extend & enhance core skills.
- Arts - teachers offer classes that allow them to teach to their talent & passions. The arts integration will allow partnering with local artists and other community resources.
- Advisee Class - The Advisee multi-age class will provide an opportunity for social problem solving, caring, sharing and decision-making.

Additional components of the school program as described in the report will include the following:

- Technology
- Kindergarten
- Extended Learning Day
- Childcare
- Garden
- Parent Involvement

In normal times, Superintendent Russell would recommend that the schools continue their work toward developing a unified program, but these are not normal times. Since the board directed the two schools to begin work on a merger, the state’s financial environment has changed.
considerably and, rather than enjoying stability, the state was preparing to make significant budget reductions next year. If the financial predictions that district staff had heard recently from State officials come true, the district’s budget shortfall for next year could reach $14-$17 million. Cuts of that magnitude will impact school staffing as well as programs and require the board to talk once again about closing small elementary schools.

Proceeding with the merger of Harris and Eastside into one school would create a school with an enrollment of about 280 students, making it one of the larger elementary schools in the south Eugene area. The district would be left, however, with the familiar dilemma of having too few kids and too many schools. So moving forward with the Harris-Eastside merger will likely put the district in the predicament of having to choose what other school to close in that area.

Some key questions related to the merger were difficult to answer or to predict. For example, how will staffing at Harris and Eastside be impacted by district-wide staffing reductions? At least 10 (staff) members at the building are new to their assignments this year, including some who are recently hired. It is quite possible that staff who had been involved in planning for the merger may have different assignments next year, if bumping occurs.

What additional resources will be needed to support the merger was also a concern. Additional resources were provided to the two schools this year to assist with the planning and program design. Will additional resources or planning time be needed to support a successful transition? The report seems to indicate that some sort of additional support will be necessary to help in transition, including ongoing design implementation.

Another question is related to school size. The district’s target was to have elementary schools of 300-450 students in order to have adequate resources to provide programs and services to serve a wide range of students. Although most of our elementary schools in south Eugene are smaller, should the district by design create a new school with less than 300 students?

In essence, the final question was whether allowing the merger of Harris and Eastside to proceed was a good idea in the short term, even though it may not be viable in the long-term, considering the district’s declining enrollment and the number of small schools that it now has and the current picture of its financial situation.

**Recommendation:**

Given the issues outlined above, Superintendent Russell recommended that the board approve the consolidation of Harris and Eastside only with the understanding that, should the district decide to close more schools, the newly merged school may still be considered for closure just as any other elementary school in the district. He also recommended that the board delay action on the consolidation proposal until the March 4 board meeting.

Principals will receive their staffing packets for 2009-10 on February 13, and the state’s updated financial forecast will be released on February 20. In the interim, Superintendent Russell would ask that the Harris/Eastside staff and the planning group discuss his concerns and indicate whether they were interested in moving ahead with the merger, considering the conditions described.

Yvonne Curtis, Director of Student Achievement, and Wally Bryant, Harris and Eastside Principal, introduced the item. Parents and staff from the advisory committee spoke positively of the process that led to the recommendations before the board.
The board was provided with a PowerPoint presentation on the superintendent’s recommendations regarding the Harris/Eastside proposal. Superintendent Russell commended and applauded staff and the parents and all those who put so much effort into planning the merger. He believed they satisfied the direction they were given by the board. He said he had raised several questions in his report to the board. The economic situation had changed since the board discussed the merger. His questions were related to the implications

Superintendent Russell recommended that the board delay a decision until March 4, and asked the Harris and Eastside staff to discuss his concerns.

Ms. Hays agreed with the recommendation of the superintendent. She did not want to slight what the board heard, but she agreed that the district was operating in trying times.

Mr. Torrey complimented the staff of Harris and Eastside. He thought they had exceeded what they hoped to achieve. He thought they served as role models for what the district had to do in regard to placing children first.

Mr. Forrest concurred with the remarks of Mr. Torrey. He said after all the district went through last year, it was exciting to hear the presentation. He thought the school sounded like a great place to attend and a great place to be a parent or teacher. He complimented the presenters.

Dr. Martinez echoed the sentiments of the Superintendent Russell and the board regarding all the work that had gone into the proposal. He said that the approach was risky, but the board was sincere about it because it thought it could be successful.

**COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS BY INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS**

Mr. Forrest suggested the board be careful about talking about elementary school closures so soon after the last discussion. He said he was a proponent, but the issue was so wounding he wanted to ensure that if dramatic cuts were to be discussed, all dramatic cuts be discussed. He challenged the board to work through the budget process with the Budget Committee and learn how much savings could be realized from closing a high school or elementary school.

Dr. Webber-Davis thanked the parents and teachers from Harris/Eastside for the information they shared. She also thanked the Martin Luther King, Jr., contest winners and commended the heartfelt essay read by Mr. Gerhart. She asked Superintendent Russell to secure the other student essays so the board could read them as well.

Dr. Webber-Davis said she had the pleasure of attending a recent workshop with 4J administrators. It had been a learning, study, and self-assessment environment. She had been impressed by the commitment and work being done throughout the district. She noted that the workshop was funded by Wallace Foundation money.

Dr. Martinez agreed with the comments of Mr. Forrest. He said the board had many decisions facing it. He said the district’s recent survey spoke to how important the issues were for the community. He encouraged the public to follow the work of the 4J Budget Committee.

Dr. Martinez said he attended a recent Equity Committee meeting and reviewed some data that the board would hear about at its March 4 work session. He anticipated the board would have lots to talk about. He had been struck by the fact those most vulnerable were the first to suffer
and the last to benefit. He hoped the board thought carefully about those impacts when it considered some of the hard decisions it had before it.

Dr. Martinez said he had spent the last few months contemplating whether he would seek another term on the board and after much consideration he had decided against it. It was not an easy decision, but because of heavy professional commitments and the realization that his now nine year-old son would be four years older after another term, he decided not to run for election again. He has been honored to serve on the board and work with the district’s amazing teachers and staff. He looks forward to serving as a cheerleader for the district when he is no longer on the board.

Dr. Martinez announced that Ms. Gerot intends to seek another term.

**ADJOURN**

Dr. Martinez adjourned the regular meeting at 9:15 p.m.

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George Russell     Charles Martinez, Jr.
District Clerk      Board Chair

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)

**Attachments to Official Minutes:**
2. Local Service Plan Report for 2007-08, 2007-08 Summary of Services for Eugene School District 4J, and Resolution Adopting the Local Service Plan
3. Grant Application Form: Beyond the Asphalt – An Outdoor Experience in Science and Technology
4. Grant Application Form: Mounting Ceiling Projectors at Kelly Middle School
6. Harris and Eastside Merger Update