The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a work session at 5:30 p.m. and a regular board meeting at 7:30 p.m. on November 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 October 30, 2009, and published in the Register-Guard on November 2, 2009.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:
Craig Smith, Chair
Beth Gerot, Vice Chair
Jennifer Geller
Alicia Hays
Anne Marie Levis
Mary Walston

STAFF:
George Russell, Superintendent of Schools and District Clerk
Barbara Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Communications Director
Susan Fahey, Chief Financial Officer
Carl Hermanns, Assistant Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer
Laurie Moses, Director of Secondary Services
Larry Sullivan, Director of Educational Support Services
Wally Bryant, Principal, Camas Ridge Elementary
Donna DuBois, Teacher, Camas Ridge Elementary School
Carmen Urbina, Parent, Community and Diversity Coordinator
Bruce Stiller, Positive Behavior Support Coordinator
Jim Conaghan, Research and Assessment Coordinator

4J EQUITY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:
Marshall Peter
Linda Hamilton
Charles Martinez
Guadalupe Quinn
Twila Souers
Peter Tromba
Jane Waite
Raquel Wells

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:
Linda Gai, International High School, All Campuses
Hannah Rosenberg, Sheldon High School

OTHERS
Paul Duchin, Eugene Education Association Co-President
Merri Steele, Eugene Education Association Co-President
WORK SESSION WITH THE EQUITY COMMITTEE

Board Chair Craig Smith called the work session of the School District 4J Board of Directors to order.

Carl Hermanns, Assistant Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer, stated that the Equity Committee looked forward to engaging in a discussion with the board following the Eugene School District 4J Equity Committee Presentation – 2009. Copies of the presentation were distributed to board members and the audience.

Jim Conaghan, Research and Assessment Coordinator, used a slide presentation to depict data regarding the achievement gap. He began with data on the ethnicity of the student population and district staff. He said the district’s administrative staff is fairly diverse and efforts are underway to recruit teachers from different minority populations.

Mr. Conaghan continued with a presentation of Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) reading and math results by ethnicity for students in grades 3-5, 6-8, and grade 10 in 2006, 2007 and 2008. He said the data represented the percentage of students in each group who met or exceeded state standards; those percentages were also compared to percentages for the state as a whole. Student achievement data from 4J was also compared to student performance for the state as a whole. He said the achievement gap is defined as the difference between the performance of white students and students in the various ethnic groups. Of particular concern is the achievement gap for American Indian, Black and Hispanic students, although the achievement gap in reading at the elementary level is declining.

In response to a question from Board Vice Chair Beth Gerot, Mr. Conaghan said that the statistical impact of students who do not meet or exceed standards is much greater when that ethnic group is small, which is why there appears to be large fluctuations in the achievement gap for some populations. He noted that the gap is worsening at the high school level for all populations and that is particularly alarming given the proficiency requirements for graduation. He noted that graduation rate calculation will be changing to a cohort model and that would result in much lower graduation rates than are currently shown. He estimated that the graduation rate for the district could drop from about 90% to 76% under the new methodology.

Bruce Stiller, Positive Behavior Support Coordinator, distributed copies of the Student Climate Survey that was used to collect information from students at one high school and three middle schools last winter in order to more accurately assess the extent of harassment and bullying in schools. He initially reviewed statistics on reports of harassment, discrimination, intimidation and bullying that were based on office discipline referral data, but he did not feel it accurately reflected the activity level as much of it was covert and did not come to the attention of adults or get entered into the database for reporting purposes.

Mr. Stiller indicated that 1,581 students completed the survey and described the methods used to administer it. He thanked the Oregon Social Learning Center (OSLC) for assistance scoring and analyzing data from the survey. He reviewed data generated by the survey and noted that the students who responded were a more diverse group than the district’s student population and cautioned against making any generalizations from the information. He hoped that the survey would eventually be administered to all students.
Continuing, Mr. Stiller explained the questions included in the survey and the options students were given for responding. He said it was clear that while many students observed bullying or harassing behaviors, it was the same students who were repeatedly targeted. He said students generally saw few effective strategies for dealing with bullying and harassment; talking to an adult was seen as a desirable strategy by many students, but they did not necessarily want the adult to take any specific action. They wanted to be heard by an adult and have the adult assist them in determining what should be done next.

Mr. Stiller listed the following significant findings from the survey:

- Native American students reported feeling the least safe from physical harm and continually rated problem-solving strategies as less effective.
- African American students (along with White students) reported observing the most bullying and harassment in general.
- Mixed race and White students reported observing the most harassment on the specific bases of gender and sexual orientation, with Latino students reporting high levels of observed harassment on the bases of gender and race, ethnicity or color.
- Asian/Pacific Islander students reported the lowest levels of observed harassment, the least involvement in harassment, and rated problem-solving strategies as less effective (along with Native American students).
- White students reported experiencing and observing the highest levels of harassment, the highest involvement in harassment, and rated problem-solving strategies as the most effective of any group.
- Latino students reported problem-solving strategies to be more effective than students in other ethnic/racial minority groups.

Mr. Stiller stated that many students felt the issue of bullying and harassment was very important and should be talked about much more frequently. He concluded his presentation with a review of statistics related to suspension and expulsion rates for middle and high school students. He noted that American Indian, Black and Hispanic students were consistently suspended at a higher rate than other groups, although the district has few expulsions because the district prefers alternative discipline strategies.

Equity Committee Chair Marshall Peter asked committee members to introduce themselves. He thanked those who were involved in preparing the committee’s report and district staff for their efforts to address equity issues. He said the data presented in the Equity Committee report had changed little from previous years and the outcomes for African American, Latino and Native American students were unconscionably lower than those of their White and Asian peers. Discussion of those issues for more than a decade had yet to result in a clearly delineated diversity and equity action plan with goals, activities, responsibilities and timelines. He said the Equity Committee had identified six topics and questions that it believed the board had to address if there was to be traction on what seemed to be intractable problems and hoped they would serve as a focal point for the evening’s discussion and the board and district’s work in the future. The topics were:

- The achievement gap is the result of students not being provided with sufficient resources, opportunities and support to succeed. How can we sustain and extend our current efforts in monitoring and accountability at the individual student level and then differentially allocate resources in ways that expand and balance opportunities for struggling students? What are the board’s specific plans for this? Can the Equity Committee count on the board to develop a line item in the budget for equity investments?
• Many students are struggling and their families are getting hammered during the current economic downtown. Unemployment, reduced access to social services and other risk factors are combining to exacerbate the opportunity gap that many students already experience in school. What steps will the board take to broaden community partnerships that will contribute to improved school outcomes? Are there untapped opportunities to partner with social service agencies, faith based communities, businesses and service clubs?

• The district is involved in many large scale improvement strategies. Sometimes policies are unevenly implemented across buildings, with only some students benefiting. An example of this was the years spent without success trying to get consistent implementation and reporting from school administrators on the district’s bullying and harassment policy. Are there improvement activities and policy decisions that are not negotiable at the building level? What is the appropriate balance between centralized and site-based decision-making?

• In light of large scale budget reductions, how do we ensure that site-based staffing decisions are well-aligned with equity goals, including retaining staff with specific skill sets pertaining to high priority instructional goals? For example, bilingual, bicultural staff, technology initiatives, cultural competence.

• We have new information that confirms concerns regarding the climate in district schools, especially for GLBTQ and Native American students. We recognize, and research supports, that school climate, formation of cultural identity and the relationship between students and teachers all contribute to academic achievement. Will the board commit to collecting student climate survey data in all of the district’s schools and developing specific improvement goals?

• Finally, how will the board know if a difference is being made and what action will be taken if there is not?

Mr. Peter said the committee was frustrated by the equity report card and implications for students of color in the Eugene School District, particularly when viewed through a historical perspective of years of little, if any, change. He said much good is going on and there is a continued basis for hope and the district has spent the last few years building capacity to engage in truly meaningful improvement. He hopes the opportunity for profound change will not be squandered or efforts to fundamentally improve the equation for struggling students diluted by budget challenges. He said the Equity Committee looks forward to working with the board and thanked board members for their contributions to the well-being of students in the community.

Mr. Smith thanked the committee for its report and agreed that little progress has been made.

Ms. Gerot said the board has the characteristics of an effective board as identified in an article about was constituted effective and ineffective school boards, but the equity report indicates that something is missing. She appreciated the issues and questions raised by the committee, particularly around accountability, and felt there should be accountability throughout the system, including the board, to improve the statistics in the equity report card next year.

Board Member Jennifer Geller appreciated the frustration experienced by Equity Committee members and asked how to create a sense of urgency for the wider community about equity issues. She said a critical component of any improvement plan would be community partnerships.
Board Member Anne Marie Levis said it is important to consider these issues before the budget cycle begins so they can be incorporated in the discussion of district resources. She agreed that establishing a line item in the budget for equity investments is a critical issue, as are increasing community partnerships and being able to determine if progress is being made. She asked about the committee’s request for a clearly delineated equity action plan.

Mr. Peter said an example would be establishing a goal to meaningfully improve the math performance of African American students and the specific operational steps and responsibility for achieving that goal.

Board Member Mary Walston asked how Oregon’s student achievement statistics compared to other states. Mr. Conaghan replied that it is difficult to make direct comparisons because states have different standards and assessment tools.

Ms. Walston noted that the achievement gap widened as students reached middle and high school levels and asked if intervention strategies could be targeted toward the transition from elementary school to middle school. Mr. Hermanns said the district is working to implement individual progress monitoring that would help teachers focus strategies on struggling students and determine if those strategies were effective. He said there is preliminary evidence that the approach is working.

Peter Tromba, Equity Committee Member and Monroe Middle School Principal, added that a staff development specialist at his school is responsible for addressing the achievement gap and recently commented that as result of the work being done, middle schools are becoming more like elementary schools. He said the elementary school model, with one teacher in the classroom, makes it easier to provide targeted intervention; it is very difficult to do that when the student is moving among a number of teachers.

Equity Committee Member Charles Martinez commented that the data reflected the faces of students and families in the district. Speaking as a former school board member, he said it is the board’s job to educate the public about equity issues and create that sense of urgency in the community. He agreed that much has been done to develop capacity; the challenge is to determine why problems persist. Identifying some of the underlying causes would help frame the formation of next steps.

Equity Committee Member Misa Joo remarked that in some cases the data hides certain stories and in the case of Asian students does not reflect the vulnerable subgroups within that population. She said it would be a mistake to draw a correlation between not observing discrimination and doing well in math. She spoke to her experience with Asian students as a Rights of Passage program instructor and cautioned the board against drawing general conclusions from the data because many voices were missing.

Board Member Alicia Hays thanked the Equity Committee for its work and the issues it presented to the board. She is committed to working on those issues.

Equity Committee Member Guadalupe Quinn stated that many in the community had reached that sense of urgency long ago because they worked with the individuals who were represented by the data and saw the results when the system did not help them. She said many students did not feel safe discussing or reporting incidents of discrimination and if they did, the data would be very different. She said families struggle to create an opportunity for their children to
have a better life and it is frustrating to lose them to the streets when the educational system cannot keep them engaged.

Ms. Joo pointed out that the data showed where staffing is needed, particularly at the middle school level. There has to be stability in staffing and programs; many programs that reach students and help them feel safe have been lost. She urged the board to use the data as a guide to who should be hired and to give additional teachers to schools who might not qualify for more staff using a traditional formula, such as those with declining enrollments. She also urged investment in programs that make a difference.

Equity Committee Member Twila Souers encouraged the board to continue to invest in professional development for district staff to build capacity.

Equity Committee Member Jane Waite acknowledged the efforts of the district over the last year or two to move away from “business as usual” and the board for establishing goals. She said transforming the system would not happen quickly, but individual successes could. She thought the district was moving in the right direction and asked the board to be conscious of and intentionally support that work.

Superintendent George Russell affirmed that it is important to continue the conversation about equity. He said it will be critical to determine whether the investments already made and those that will be made were the right ones. He noted that despite targeted investments in literacy, scores for Latino and African American students continue to decline. He said the district is not likely to have more resources and needs to find a way to target the resources it does have in a more effective way. He believes that having better data about the effectiveness of strategies will help guide those choices.

Mr. Martinez said there is no panacea to closing the achievement gap, but recommended conducting a comprehensive analysis of strategies to determine which ones have a substantial impact on student achievement. Those that are effective should be supported and the others eliminated.

Mr. Smith adjourned the work session at 7 p.m. The board attended a reception honoring Oregon Teacher of the Year Donna Dubois.

**CALL TO ORDER AND FLAG SALUTE**

Board Vice Chair Beth Gerot called the regular meeting of the School District 4J Board of Directors to order at 7:30 p.m. She announced that Board Member Jim Torrey was out of town and Mr. Smith had left the meeting due to illness. She led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**AGENDA REVIEW**

Superintendent Russell asked to incorporate the information item related to recognizing Donna DuBois into his report. There were no objections.

**INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

Superintendent Russell recognized Donna DuBois, 4th grade teacher at Camas Ridge Elementary School, for her selection as the 2009-10 Oregon Teacher of the Year. He invited
Ms. DuBois and Camas Ridge Principal Wally Bryant to join the board. He conveyed congratulations from State Superintendent of Public Instruction Susan Castillo, who was unable to attend the reception. He also conveyed his and the board’s appreciation for her selection and her representation of the excellent teachers in the district.

Mr. Bryant expressed his pride in Ms. DuBois and her reflection of the other teachers in the district. He described the rigorous application and selection process for Teacher of the Year.

Ms. DuBois thanked the board for the reception and felt very honored to have been chosen as Teacher of the Year among so many teachers who could have been selected. She read a statement about why people choose the profession of education, whether as a school board member, school employee or teacher.

“We are here to inspire. We are here to encourage. We are here to smile at the child who is lacking a smile from anyone else. We are here to provide stability when a child’s home life is anything but stable. We are here to provide a snack when a child comes to school hungry. We are here to provide humor when a child needs to laugh. We are here to provide guidance to the child who feels lost. We are here to teach children to become the future of our country, to become independent, self-sufficient thinkers. We are here to protect the children of America. It is a huge calling and we all do it with humor, fun, originality, love and undying dedication. We are here because we believe in something greater. We believe in the human spirit. We hone artistic ability and nurture it, even when reading fluency scores are low. We nurture musical talent, even when a student has trouble reciting math facts off the tip of their tongue. We see effort, even after failure. We nurture the human spirit, even when test scores are low. We see the human spirit striving for success, because that’s what educators see. We encourage the youth of America to be all they can be. We teach. Thank you to everyone who has helped me to be the best I can be.”

Superintendent Russell said the board held a joint work session with the Equity Committee prior to the regular meeting and viewed data that could be very alarming and discouraging. He stated that Ms. DuBois and all of the teachers in the district are very committed to closing the achievement gap, addressing equity issues; reflecting all of those teachers and how important they are to students. He thanked Ms. DuBois for representing the teachers of Eugene and being such an outstanding example of them.

Ms. DuBois introduced members of her family who were present and thanked them for their support.

Superintendent Russell commended the state’s proposal for federal Race to the Top education funds and was encouraged that Oregon would be competitive in the grant process. He said that funds could be available to help with the type of efforts discussed during the work session, with a focus on closing the achievement gap, equity and instructional improvement.

COMMENTS BY STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Hannah Rosenberg, Sheldon High School, said all students were preparing for finals, which were set for the following week. A production of Dracula will open Friday, November 13, and continue through November 21 and the public is invited. She said staff and administration are working to enhance students’ writing skills as that is an area for improvement identified in OAKS testing.
Linda Gai, International High School, all campuses, announced that the application deadline for the IHS travel scholarship is November 13. She said an IHS alumnus is generously providing support for students who wish to study abroad but lack the financial means to do so. An IHS art sale will occur in early December and the proceeds will go to a United Nations initiative to establish an international holiday dedicated to peace.

**ITEMS RAISED BY THE AUDIENCE**

There was no one wishing to speak.

**COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS**

Merri Steele, Co-President of Eugene Education Association (EEA), expressed EEA’s pleasure at the selection of Donna DuBois as Oregon Teacher of the Year and her gracious sharing of that honor with her colleagues.

Paul Duchin, EEA Co-President, congratulated Ms. Walston and welcomed her to the board. He spoke to Eugene Association of Substitute Teachers (EAST) bargaining issues, asserting that EAST guest teachers are working without a contract. He said the EAST bargaining team had agreed to no insurance increase for a two-year period, freezing the district’s contribution at $360 per month. By comparison, guest teachers qualified for the district contribution were only receiving 30 percent of what other employees received as a district contribution toward insurance. He said if guest teachers qualified and selected an insurance option, they were not eligible for pay differentials.

Ms. Steele noted that other employee units chose to cut days or freeze cost-of-living allowances (COLA) to address the current financial crisis; however, classified, licensed and administrative employees all received increases in the district’s insurance contribution. EAST had agreed to no insurance increase for two years and no COLA increase in the first year of a two-year contract to assist with the financial situation. She hoped the board recognized that the cost of a small COLA in the second year was offset by the other savings.

Mr. Duchin said the number of staff affected by the H1N1 virus is increasing dramatically and at one point there were no guest teachers to assign to classrooms in the district. He said the collective bargaining agreement between EAST and the district had provided a stable guest teacher pool and asked the board to continue to support that by providing a COLA increase in the second year of a two-year contract. He was concerned that the situation with EAST was a warning shot from the board about upcoming bargaining for teachers.

Ms. Steele announced that a phone bank had been established for the tax initiative and welcomed participation by board members.

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**Receive a Report on Ballot Measures 66 and 67**

Barbara Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Communications Director, reported on two referendums challenging tax increases passed by the 2009 Legislature which will be submitted to the voters in a January 26, 2010 special election.
Ballot Measure 66, Citizen Tax Referendum-Personal Tax Increase-House Bill 2649, proposes to increase personal income tax rates on taxable income of $125,000 or more for single filers and $250,000 for joint filers. If approved, the measure would raise $472 million for the 2009-11 biennium. In subsequent biennia, the measure would raise approximately $375 million per biennium.

Measure 67, Citizen Tax Referendum-Corporate Tax Increase-House Bill 3405, proposes to increase corporate taxes by raising the $10 corporate minimum tax, establishing a $150 minimum tax for businesses, raising the corporate profits tax, and increasing certain business filing fees. The measure would raise $261 million for the 2009-11 biennium. In subsequent biennia, the measure would raise on average $250 million per biennium.

The 2009 Legislature passed the tax increases and used the $733 million in revenue to balance the 2009-11 state budget. Funding for K-12 public education currently makes up approximately 40% of the state General Fund and Lottery budget. If the two measures are not approved by voters and the loss of revenue is spread evenly across-the-board, schools can anticipate a funding reduction of $285.5 million or $431 per ADMw for the 2009-11 biennium. The proportionate reduction for the Eugene School District would be approximately $8.5 million or about 6% of the operating budget and equivalent to the annual cost of operating one of the district's four high schools.

Ms. Bellamy explained that a “yes” vote on the measures would support the tax increases. Copies of the draft measures were included in the board packet.

Ms. Geller reminded the public that the reductions that would occur if the measures were defeated would be in addition to the $20 million already cut from the budget. She noted that Oregon already has one of the shortest school years and among the largest class sizes in the country. The revenue expected from the tax measures would not entirely fill the gap.

Ms. Gerot pointed out that human services, public safety and education comprise 97% of the state’s budget and that is where cuts would be made. She said accurate information on the impact of the tax measures on the economy is available on the Oregon School Boards Association’s (OSBA) website.

CONSENT GROUP – ITEMS FOR ACTION

Approve Board Meeting Minutes

The superintendent recommended approval of the minutes from the September 30, 2009, regular board meeting and the October 7, 2009 work session and regular board meeting. Copies of the minutes were included in the board packet.

Approve Personnel Items

The superintendent recommended approval of the personnel items included in the board packet. Those covered employment, resignations, and other routine personnel matters.

MOTION: Ms. Levis, seconded by Ms. Geller, moved to approve the consent items.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously; 5:0.
COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS BY INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Levis congratulated Ms. DuBois on her selection as Teacher of the Year, stating she is an inspiring teacher and Camas Ridge is lucky to have her. She continues to pursue her goal of visiting all 4J schools by the end of 2009. She attended an Oregon Transportation Association conference recently and went to a session on public health and its relationship to transportation. She described various programs designed to improve public health through active transportation and ways that schools and school boards could address problems of childhood obesity. She is proud of the district’s efforts in that regard.

Ms. Walston thanked the Equity Committee for its report and looks forward to future discussions. She has been visiting district schools and noted that many staff have been absent with the H1N1 virus.

Ms. Geller congratulated Ms. Levis for being a finalist for Business Leader of the Year. She said during a recent visit to Sheldon High School she observed a powerful student discussion during which a student with disabilities was explaining to other students how difficult it was for him to go to school sometimes. She hoped that similar discussions were occurring at other schools.

Ms. Hays also congratulated Ms. DuBois. She challenged the board to stay engaged in equity issues and push for action. She hoped there would be another work session soon, and encouraged board members to attend an Equity Committee meeting.

Ms. Gerot announced that Ms. DuBois was scheduled to speak at the OSBA Conference. She spent the previous week with OSBA going to various regional meetings. Her goal is to visit all regions and talk to school board members from around the state.

ADJOURN

Ms. Gerot adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

George Russell     Beth Gerot
Superintendent     Board Vice Chair

(Recorded by Lynn Taylor)

Attachments to Official Minutes:
1. Equity Committee Materials
2. Draft Ballot Measures and Financial Estimate Statements
3. Personnel Action Items