MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4J, LANE COUNTY, OREGON

January 10, 2006

Meeting Convened

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held an Executive Session at 6 p.m. and a regular meeting at 7 p.m. on January 10, 2006, at the Education Center, 200 North Monroe Street, Eugene, Oregon. Notice of the meeting was mailed to the media and posted in Education Center on January 5, 2007, and published in *The Register-Guard* on January 8, 2007.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:
Tom Herrmann, Chair
Charles Martinez, Jr., Vice Chair
Eric Forrest
Alicia Hayes
Craig Smith
Yvette Webber-Davis

STAFF:
George Russell, Superintendent of Schools and district Clerk
Barbara Bellamy, Director, Communications and Intergovernmental Relations
Ted Heid, Director of Labor Relations
Tom Henry, Assistant Superintendent – Instructional Services & School Services K-8
Bill Hirsh, Director of Facilities and Transportation (at 6:25 p.m.)
Jon Lauch, Assistant Director of Facilities Management (at 6:25 p.m.)
Laurie Moses, Director of High School Services
Kelly McIver, Communications Coordinator

MEDIA:
Anne Williams, *The Register-Guard*
Katie Dyer, KVAL TV (for part of the meeting only)

OTHER:
Bob Frazier, Luvaas Cobb (at 6:25 p.m.)
Sue Prichard, Prichard Partners (at 6:25 p.m.)

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Under provisions of ORS 192.610 – 192.690, Open Meeting Laws, the Board of Directors conducted an Executive Session for the following purpose:

To conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions, pursuant to ORS 192.660 (1) (e) and to consider the dismissal or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual agent, pursuant to ORS 192.660 (2) (b)
The board recessed after consideration of the dismissal or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual agent until 6:25 p.m., at which time they reconvened in Executive Session for the purpose of deliberations with persons designed by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions.

REGULAR MEETING: The Executive Session recessed and the regular meeting convened with the above board members and staff present, along with the following:

STAFF:
Hillary Kittleson, Director of Financial Services
Kay Mehas, Director of School Services
Caroline Passerotti, Financial Analyst
Jeff Johnson, Principal Jefferson Middle School

STUDENT ADVISORY PANEL MEMBERS:
Joseph Dombrosky, Churchill High School
Antonio Salgado, North Eugene High School

CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND FLAG SALUTE

Mr. Hermann called the meeting of the Eugene School District 4J Board of Directors to order. He welcomed new board member Alicia Hayes. He led those present in the pledge of allegiance.

AGENDA REVIEW

Mr. Hermann dropped item VII (1), Consider Action on Personnel Matter Pertaining to Dismissal or Discipline of Employee, from the agenda.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS AND SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Superintendent Russell also welcomed new board member Hayes.

Superintendent Russell called the board’s attention to the information provided in the red folder, first noting the information provided by the Forum on Educational Accountability regarding recommended changes to the No Child Left Behind Act with an updated list of signers. He recalled for the benefit of the board Mayor Kitty Piercy’s sustainable business effort, which she had mentioned in her recent State of the City address. He said that she and Lisa Arkin of the Oregon Toxics Alliance had also briefed himself, Mr. Henry, and Ms. Bellamy about the effort. He anticipated that Ms. Arkin would come to the next board meeting and address it during the public comment period about what the district could do in regard to sustainability. The red folder included a flyer from the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency about improving air quality at the schools.

Superintendent Russell called the board to an article from the The Education Trust entitled Funding Gaps 2006.

Superintendent Russell noted the inclusion in the meeting packet materials of a document entitled An Informational Packet on the Benefits of the K-8 Configuration, which was provided at Ms. Webber-Davis’ request.
Superintendent Russell called the board’s attention to the minutes of the February 15, 2006, board meeting, copies of which were provided in the packet to remind the board of the actions taken that day in response to the report from the Alternative School Review Team. He also noted the inclusion of a summary of the board’s actions taken since that time.

COMMENTS BY STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Antonio Salgado, North Eugene High School, said the school was completing “Project Give” and experienced a good turnout. About 50 families were fed in one day. He thanked Grocery Outlet on River Road for donating 50 hams and other foods to the cause. He reported that the school would hold a Martin Luther King, Jr. assembly later that week organized by Leon Lincoln. He said his catering class doing a big fund raiser for North Eugene High School alumni. He was a student supervisor and soliciting beverages. They had reached the $1,000 level in donations with more to come. He noted that North Eugene was number one in the state for basketball.

Joseph Dombrosky, Churchill High School, said during a recent leadership meeting, students had the opportunity to hear student service reports from various students. Students just got basketball shirts. He reported that the school had funds from past graduated senior classes for an electric marquee and students were looking at different designs, and hoped for its installation by year’s end.

ITEMS RAISED BY THE AUDIENCE

Mr. Hermann determined there was no one present who wished to offer public comment at that time.

COMMENTS BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Paul Duchin and Merri Steel of the Eugene Education Association (EEA) were present for the item. Mr. Duchin also welcomed Ms. Hayes. He thanked the board for allowing the EEA to give its Martin Luther King, Jr., awards at the next board meeting, during which students would read their winning poems.

Ms. Steel referred to the agenda item related to Jefferson Middle School and discussed the EEA’s concern about the changes related to the modified school calendar and length of the day. She said the EEA expected to be involved in that process before any decision was made, and while she believed the intent was that it would be, she thought that should be clarified in writing.

Mr. Duchin noted the contract already contained a provision that the union would be consulted on the schedule and maintenance of standards, so that changing job conditions without employee involvement could not occur. The union supported the concept and had supported a modified calendar in the past, but the EEA needed to be involved in working out the issues. He cited the schedule for itinerant teachers as an example. He noted the irony of being asked by Human Resources to approve certain hiring practices that would have made it possible for those serving on the committee working with parents may not end up being employees of Jefferson. The union objected, and he did not think it would be the case, but it would have created a situation where people not working on the site were making decisions about the site.

Mr. Duchin recalled that five years ago, the board passed some resolutions that stated before such initiatives were taken up by the district, work load was to be a consideration; he did not think that had been the case, and reminded the board that the resolution had not been rescinded. All initiatives had workload impacts.
ITEMS FOR ACTION AT THIS MEETING

Approve the Superintendent’s Recommendation to Close Jefferson Middle School and Magnet Arts Elementary School and Create the Arts and Technology Academy at Jefferson

Superintendent Russell reviewed his recommendation: In the spring of 2006, I proposed closing Magnet Arts Elementary School and Thomas Jefferson Middle School due to declining enrollment and initiated planning for a new, small K-8 school focused on the arts and technology to open in 2007-2008 in the Jefferson building.

Since that time, staff has worked to further develop the framework for the new school. The board is asked to consider two actions: closing the two existing schools as of June 30, 2007 and approving the creation of the new Arts and Technology Academy at Jefferson, including the proposed grade structure, attendance boundary and enrollment priorities and key concepts proposed below. This will enable staff to provide clear information about the new school to the parents and students during the district’s school choice period, which starts in January.

I. Proposal to Close Magnet Arts and Jefferson Middle School

District enrollment at the elementary level has been declining for more than a decade, causing the board to close and consolidate six elementary schools in recent years. Since 2000, middle school enrollment has dropped by 500 students—roughly the equivalent of one school building—as smaller elementary classes have moved upward into middle school. At the district level, we project enrollment to continue to decline over the next few years and to stabilize in 2015.

Jefferson Middle School has experienced significant declining enrollment over the past five years. In 2000, Jefferson’s enrollment was 463. This year, only 219 students are enrolled. Magnet Arts enrollment has declined from 128.5 students in 2000 to 88 students this year (kindergarten students counted as .5). With smaller enrollments, it was necessary to provide additional resources to both schools for 2006-07 in order for them to provide a viable program.

II. Proposal to Create the Arts and Technology Academy at Jefferson

The creation of a new school provides an opportunity to implement a fresh, new school with a different grade configuration and to incorporate new approaches that have proven successful in improving teaching, learning and student achievement. I am proposing the new school be named the Arts and Technology Academy at Jefferson.

The Arts and Technology Academy at Jefferson will:

- Serve 250-300 students in kindergarten-grade 8 as one school with a single staff, site council and budget and with an integrated academic program. The intent is to create a unified K-8 school, as opposed to operating as an elementary school and a middle school that are housed within the same building.
- Emphasize integration of the arts and technology with high achievement in academics and expand access to technology for students.
- Operate with a modified school calendar to reduce the length of time that students are out of school during the summer and, if feasible provide inter-session schooling during the
seasonal breaks. The school’s specific calendar, including the length of the school day and the schedule for the school year, will be developed by the school planning team in consultation with parents.

- Provide full-day kindergarten and extended learning activities, to the extent feasible within the resources available to the school.

Attendance boundary, enrollment priority and process:

The neighborhood attendance boundary for the new school will be consistent with the existing attendance boundary for Jefferson Middle School.

- All students currently attending Magnet Arts Elementary School and Jefferson Middle School will be allowed to enroll at the new school in 2007-08, regardless of where they reside.
- Students in grades K-5 who reside within this boundary will be given priority for enrollment. These students will need to make application to the school, as the school’s overall enrollment will be limited. In 2007-08, we expect the K-5 enrollment will be 125 students.
- This will continue to be the neighborhood school for all students in grades 6-8. This may need to be reviewed and changed if significant enrollment changes take place.

Superintendent recommendations:

1. The superintendent recommended that the board close Magnet Arts Alternative Elementary School and Jefferson Middle School, effective June 30, 2007.

2. The superintendent recommended that the board authorize the establishment of the Arts and Technology Academy at Jefferson as described above, beginning with the 2007-08 school year, and designate it as an academy school for 2007-08 and 08-09.

Superintendent Russell indicated he had modified some elements of the agreement in response to concerns voiced by Ms. Steel and Mr. Duchin, which had been shared with him earlier.

Superintendent Russell noted that Ms. Hayes had brought up some of the same issues raised by the EEA, particularly in regard to special needs and itinerant teachers. He believed those issues would need to be worked out. He referred to page 2 of the agreement, and noted modifications to the text that had been made in response to those concerns. Superintendent Russell noted that only the board could make a decision about the calendar, and he wanted to ensure that was clear, as well as ensure that consultation with the EEA occurred.

Superintendent Russell reviewed the two recommendations before the board.

**MOTION:** Mr. Martinez, seconded by Mr. Forrest, moved to adopt recommendation 1.

**VOTE:** The motion passed unanimously, 6:0

**MOTION:** Mr. Martinez, seconded by Mr. Smith, moved to adopt recommendation 2 with the changes described by Superintendent Russell.

Mr. Forrest continued to be concerned about the proposal. He thought that it was an interesting concept and had merit but he found it inconsistent with the class sizes contemplated in the
Schools of the Future Project. He said that many parents would want to send their children to a school of the size contemplated. Speaking to the bullet points included in the recommendation, he noted that the school was established to serve 250 to 350 students but the existing middle school base was 220 students, making a total of 345 students, 50 students over the top projection. He asked how the district accounted for that.

Mr. Johnson responded that staff believed there was room for growth in the program. The district would start with 350 students and consider the possibilities. He thought the proposal a starting point as the district worked to rebuild interest in the school and revitalize it. Mr. Henry noted that the 8th grade class leaving middle school was larger than the one entering. The formulas staff used to do class size projections indicated the number was closer to 300, and lower than that for the initial middle school class. There were more middle school students in the region, but they had other options. He expected 175 middle school students and 125 elementary school students.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 6:0.

Approve Revisions to Board Policy IGBC Title I/Parent Involvement Policy

Currently Eugene School District 4J has Board Policy IGBC called Comparability Requirements of Title 1 that was adopted and revised on 12-11-02. This current board policy is not complete enough, nor does it reflect all the required parental involvement components of NCLB. The new proposed policy brings our district into compliance with the NCLB requirements of having a district parent involvement policy.

The new proposed Board Policy IGBC called District Title 1/Parental Involvement, from the sample Oregon School Board Association policies, was reviewed and edited by the Title 1 Principals and Coordinators, as well as a group of educational leaders and parents.

The draft policy has also been taken to the ILT (Instructional Leadership Team) for their input and support. This new policy will meet the Title 1 requirements and the NCLB federal monitoring requirements for parental involvement in our district and our Title 1 schools. It will provide future support and guidance for our schools and our district, as we implement and strengthen our work with parental involvement.

Janis Swan, Federal Program Coordinator and Tami Walkup, Title I Parent Involvement Coordinator was at the December 13, 2006 meeting to respond to questions.

The superintendent recommended approval of the revisions to Board Policy IGBC as presented.

Tom Henry, Deputy Superintendent, offered to answer any questions, noting the policy had been reviewed by Janis Swan at the last meeting. He recalled that staff had offered the policy as a better blueprint for parent involvement in the Title I program. He noted that the policy had considerable input from staff and the advisory group for the Title I program.

MOTION: Dr. Webber-Davis, seconded by Mr. Smith, moved to adopt the revisions to the policy.

Mr. Forrest asked why the district required only one instead of two parent conferences. Mr. Henry said that it was traditional in the district. He pointed out that there were several opportunities for parent contacts on an as-needed basis, and the district had conducted
conferences beyond the fall conferences if needed. Mr. Forrest was concerned that the parents of children who were doing well in school did not have guidance at the end of the year about what they could for further student development before the next school year.

**VOTE:** The motion passed unanimously, 6:0.

**Approve Revisions to School Board Policy JECC School Choice**

The policy establishes priorities for students to be placed on waiting lists to enroll in schools other than their neighborhood schools. District staff is recommending that a priority be added to Policy JECC to establish attendance area priorities for resident students in identified schools to manage student enrollment. For example, the policy change could give priority to students living in a high school attendance area applying to the International High School campus located in that attendance area. If enrollment in IHS were to be limited, this would give students priority to attend the IHS program at their neighborhood high school.

One additional policy revision for student priority was provided for consideration. Board member Martinez at the November 15, 2006 meeting requested that staff include a revision to the current policy that gives priority to students who qualify for free or reduced meals, and are applying to elementary schools that are below the district average for free or reduced meals. The suggested policy change would extend this SES priority beyond elementary schools to all schools that are below district averages for free and reduced meals. A chart showing the schools that would be below the district FRL and therefore would be subject to providing “alternative basis” priority was included in the board packet. While the superintendent is in agreement with this direction, as are the high school principals and director of high school services, he said he was not convinced that we have done the same due diligence analysis and research related to this suggested change as was previously done for making the change at elementary level as part of the whole access and options process. For that reason, he believed it appropriate to hold off on this change and consider it as a part of the strategic planning process currently underway to review enrollment patterns, school boundaries, alternative school relocation, and future school consolidations or reconfiguration.

The superintendent recommended approval of the addition of priority 3.a., which states: The school board may establish attendance area priorities for students who reside in an attendance area to manage student enrollment capacity.

The superintendent at this time does not recommend a change in 3.b. to extend the SES priority beyond elementary schools.

Tom Henry recalled board discussion about two possible changes to the policy, one establishing attendance area priorities and one extending priority to students on free and reduced lunch to schools that were above the district average for free and reduced lunches. He said the superintendent did not recommend the free and reduced policy change at this time as staff wished to analyze the impact. Staff was doing it at the elementary school level and wanted to monitor the impact. However, Superintendent Russell did support the other policy change. Mr. Henry invited questions.

Mr. Martinez concurred for the need for more analysis, and asked how staff would know that there was a need to generalize the policy across other schools. Superintendent Russell suggested that the subject could be addressed through the strategic planning process now underway, which was examining issues around enrollment, neighborhoods, boundaries, and access for children from different backgrounds, and a proposal could come out of that process.
Mr. Henry recommended revised option A of the policy, included in the meeting packet.

**MOTION:** Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Martinez, moved to adopt superintendent’s recommendation for revised Policy JECC on School Choice.

Ms. Webber-Davis called attention to a grammatical error in the lottery section. It was accepted as a friendly amendment by the maker of the motion and the second.

**VOTE:** The amended motion passed unanimously, 6:0.

**Establish Residence Priority for International High School Students**

The International High School will be limiting enrollment to projections at high school campuses next year to prevent over-enrollment on any one campus. If more students apply than space available, establishing priority for students who reside in the attendance area would provide students a better opportunity to attend their neighborhood school for IHS. For example, if South is projected for 181 ninth graders at IHS and 240 students apply, South students would be placed in IHS before students from other attendance areas.

Subject to approval of revisions in School Choice Policy JECC, the superintendent recommends that priority be given to students who live in a high school attendance area applying to the International High School located in that attendance area.

Mr. Henry asked the board to establish a residence priority for students who live in a high school attendance area for application to the International High School Program within that attendance area.

**MOTION:** Mr. Forrest, seconded by Ms. Webber-Davis, moved to adopt the superintendent’s recommendation for establishing a residence priority for International High School students.

**VOTE:** The motion passed unanimously, 6:0.

**Conduct a Public Hearing on the Recommendations from the Superintendent in Response to the Alternative School Review Team’s Report**

Superintendent Russell introduced the item, recalling the board’s receipt of the report on the alternative schools. He recalled the process that led to this point and said the board had given clear direction to staff that it was not interested in the elimination of choice, but rather in exploring what a system of choice could look like, and what changes would be necessary to make access to choice more equitable.

Superintendent Russell provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining the findings of the alternative schools report, the board’s consensus statements on the report, and his recommendations related to grade level caps, co-location of alternative and neighborhood schools, and special education and language immersion, and his recommendations specific to Buena Vista Spanish Immersion, Charlemagne French Immersion, Yakin Gakuen Japanese Immersion, and Corridor.

Mr. Hermann opened the public hearing.
Donna Dubois, a teacher at Fox Hollow and the parent of a special education student at that school, said it saddened her heart that the Alternative School Review Team had not experienced what her daughter had experienced at Fox Hollow. She enjoyed her learning experience every day and was making amazing progress. Ms. Dubois said that information about the district’s alternative schools was not provided in a way that the underprivileged could access it. The alternative schools were only mentioned once on the district’s Web site. She thought people were unaware of the school or thought it was private. She urged the district to get the word about the school out to the public.

Peggy Young, also a parent and employee at Fox Hollow School, suggested that learning a second language was valuable to cultural awareness. In Canada, a second language education was a legal right. The program promoted cultural diversity. She hoped all students would someday have the opportunity to learn a second language, as it would help the country as a whole relate to the rest of the world. She noted those in support of emergent learning. She thought the school promoted diversity by simply existing.

Mr. Hermann closed the public hearing.

CONSENT GROUP - ITEMS FOR ACTION

MOTION: Mr. Martinez, seconded by Mr. Smith, moved to approve the items on the Consent Calendar.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 6:0.

Approve Personnel Items

The superintendent recommended approval of the personnel items included in the packet. These cover employment, resignations, and other routine personnel matters. (See Attached)

ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING

Recommendations from the Superintendent in Response to the Alternative School Review Team’s Report

The board on August 17, 2005 adopted a School Choice policy that established a process for the review of alternative schools. In September 2005, Superintendent Russell appointed an alternative schools review team (Review Team) composed of Carl Hermanns, former superintendent intern from the Urban Superintendent Program at Harvard Graduate School of Education; Jerry Henderson, retired principal from South Eugene High School; Ray Gross retired high school teacher and former president of the Eugene Education Association; and, Kay Mehas, director of K-8 school services. Last year four alternative schools were chosen for review: Eastside, Family School, Hillside, and Magnet Arts. In February 2006, the board-adopted recommendations related to the first group of elementary alternative schools reviewed under board policy IGBH. The remaining four alternative schools – Buena Vista, Charlemagne at Fox Hollow, Yujin Gakuen, and Corridor – are the subjects of this year’s report. On December 13, 2006, the Review Team submitted its comprehensive and thorough report of findings and conclusions. The board received the report of the Review Team at its December 13 meeting.

Superintendent Russell extended my appreciation to the review team for the excellent job. While not everyone will agree with their findings and conclusions, he was impressed with the quality of their work and their continuing commitment to the fairness and integrity of the process.
he noted that all of the schools reviewed are excellent schools and do an outstanding job of educating the children they serve. The alternative school review was conducted to determine how those schools fared in terms of the adopted criteria in the board policy.

I. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review Team considered the following four alternative schools: Buena Vista Spanish Immersion at Meadowlark, Charlemagne at Fox Hollow, Yujin Gakuen at Silver Lea, and Corridor Alternative at Silver Lea. By reference, the superintendent adopted the findings and conclusions contained in The Alternative School Review Report submitted on December 13, 2006. Following are the superintendent’s general comments and recommendations related to the report. Those are then followed by specific comments and recommendations related to each of the schools reviewed.

**General Comments/Recommendations**

a. Grade Level Caps

In its initial review of alternative schools in December 2005, the Review Team concluded that there are no strong educational justifications for retaining grade level caps for alternative schools. It was their opinion that grade level caps are problematic in terms of equitable access; that is, when grade level enrollments are capped, the lottery disadvantages children who attempt to enroll in upper grades. I agreed at that time, and recommended that we move ahead immediately for 2006-07 to eliminate grade-level caps in the four schools reviewed, as well as Corridor, the other non-language immersion school scheduled for review in 2006-07. The board decided not to include Corridor, choosing instead to wait for the results of the 2006-07 review process. I did not include the language immersion schools in that recommendation because I was open to the possibility that there could be a strong educational justification for grade-level caps in those schools, a possibility raised by the Review Team. With respect to the schools reviewed this year, the Review Team determined that there was not a strong enough educational rationale to justify the continuance of grade-level caps in Corridor or the immersion schools, and therefore recommended that grade-level caps be eliminated for all alternative schools. I concur, and now recommend that grade-level caps be eliminated for Corridor and the three language immersion schools as well.

b. Co-location of Alternative and Neighborhood Schools

I concurred with the Review Team’s observation in its previous report that there were tensions among all four alternative schools reviewed and their co-located neighborhood schools. I concluded that co-location was not contributing to the schools’ optimal educational climate and that the district should proceed to uncouple alternative schools from neighborhood schools. While the board determined that no relocation decisions would be made for 2006-07 as an outcome of the first review, they did direct that co-location and relocation of alternative schools be considered as part of the district’s longer-term planning for future school consolidations, reconfigurations and/or planning for school construction and school renovation.

I recommended that the district begin developing a process in spring 2006 for a larger review of enrollment patterns, school boundaries, alternative school relocation, school closure and consolidation, and possible new construction or renovations. I
also noted that reassessment of the placement of learning centers, regional learning centers and ESD programs serving special education students should be included in this review. That process has begun and is now underway as part of the strategic planning process, Shaping 4J’s Future. As part of that process, I anticipate there will be recommendations related to relocation of alternative schools that share a building with neighborhood schools, but also consideration of the optimal locations of alternative schools to reinforce their viability and accessibility.

Additionally, while I think it’s important that the location of the language immersion schools be considered as part of the Shaping 4J’s Future process for the reasons identified above and later, I am also intrigued with the question for all language immersion schools of whether students and instruction would be better served in a K-8 standalone setting. So, as the Shaping 4J’s Future process moves forward I would hope that is a consideration that will be looked at.

c. Special Education and Language Immersion

While serving children with special needs is an important concern for all schools, the relationship of special education with our language immersion schools raised specific questions in the reviews of the immersion schools. As previously reported, there have been anecdotal reports that some alternative schools, including some immersion schools, had discouraged special education students from attending their schools, or counseled them out of their programs. The Review Team noted that there were relatively low percentages of special education students attending the immersion schools and questioned whether it was a result of an unwelcoming atmosphere, or of parents’ and/or the schools’ beliefs that immersion schools would not be educationally helpful or appropriate for special needs students. They identified a compelling need to work with the schools to ensure that they create and maintain a culture that is perceived as encouraging of and welcoming to students and families with special needs. In addressing special education instructional challenges specific to language immersion programs, they suggest reaching out to and creating stronger ties with community and University experts in language immersion and special education advocacy. I support the Review Team’s recommendations and will work with staff to assist the schools in developing and initiating strategies to address the identified concerns.

d. Diversity

The Review Team points out that the district’s challenge is to ensure that its school choice system facilitates the board’s goal of providing an excellent and equitable education for all its students. Alternative schools must be welcoming to any family that might desire their specific educational programs for their children, and must be ready to effectively teach those children. The Review Team assessed diversity by looking at the diversity of the school’s student population, as exemplified by the school’s racial and ethnic makeup, the percentages of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (SES), and the percentages of English language learners (ELL) and special education students; and evidence of school culture and instructional practices that do, or could, support diverse student populations. They determined that while several of the schools had work to do in this area, there was openness on the part of the schools to work with district staff and community to address any concerns in this area. I support the Review Team’s conclusions in this area and will
work with staff to assist the schools in developing and initiating strategies to address the identified concerns.

School Reviews

I believe that many of the conclusions and recommendations proposed by the Review Team constitute administrative actions that don’t necessarily require board action or directives. For that reason, I only put forth those recommendations that require board action, or for which it is important to have board direction and support. I am not recommending the addition of any new staff or resources and expect that implementation will occur through use of existing resources as available. Following are my responses and recommendations with respect to the findings and conclusions of the Alternative School Review Team for each of the alternative schools reviewed.

Buena Vista Spanish Immersion

The Review Team concluded that Buena Vista’s Spanish language immersion program is systematically and effectively implemented throughout the school, grades 1 through 5, and thus represents a distinctive educational strategy for achieving the board’s educational goals. It has shown consistently strong enrollment, demonstrates continued strong parent and staff interest and commitment, and is well positioned to contribute to the board’s goal of increasing equity and diversity. However, the Review Team also observed that while the tensions of co-location are not directly impairing the overall quality of Buena Vista or Meadowlark, they did find similar stresses, to a greater or lesser degree, as experienced at other neighborhood/alternative school co-locations.

I concur with the findings and conclusions of the Review Team and recommend that in addition to the elimination of grade-level caps for Buena Vista the following actions be approved by the board:

1. No Change in Status. Through this action, the board supports the continuation of Buena Vista as a strong, viable and effective language immersion school.
2. No formal Plan for Improvement, but an expectation that district staff work with Buena Vista to develop strategies to address the key findings of the report related to attracting and addressing the instructional needs of a more diverse student population, specifically low SES, special education, and ELL students.
3. Direct staff to explore the addition of a kindergarten to Buena Vista in 2008-09, including assessment of the instructional, enrollment and facilities implications for both Buena Vista and Meadowlark.
4. Direct staff to consider future relocation of Buena Vista from Meadowlark Elementary to a standalone site or co-location with another alternative school as part of the current strategic planning process, Shaping 4J’s Future.

Charlemagne French Immersion

The Review Team concluded that Charlemagne’s French language immersion program is systematically and effectively implemented throughout the school, grades K through 5, and thus represents a distinctive educational strategy for achieving the board’s educational goals. Charlemagne has shown consistently strong enrollment, and it demonstrates continued strong parent and staff interest and commitment. However, the Review Team also concluded that Charlemagne is not contributing substantively to the board’s goal of increasing equity and diversity in all schools. They suggest that to effectively serve a diverse student population,
Charlemagne will need to address three areas: effective instructional techniques to support diverse learners; general school culture; and, community perceptions.

I concur with the findings and conclusions of the Review Team and recommend that in addition to the elimination of grade-level caps for Charlemagne the following actions be approved by the board:

1. No Change in Status. Through this action, the board supports the continuation of Charlemagne as a strong, viable and effective language immersion school.
2. Plan for Improvement. Direct district staff to work with Charlemagne to develop a Plan for Improvement to address the key findings of the report related to a) attracting and addressing the instructional needs of a more diverse student population, including low SES, special education, ELL and students of color; b) providing a general school culture that is welcoming to students and families from different backgrounds and cultures; and c) working with staff to ensure that they identify and serve their special needs children appropriately and well.
3. Direct staff to consider as part of the current strategic planning process, Shaping 4J’s Future, whether the current location of Charlemagne at the Fox Hollow site is the optimal location for ensuring equal access and diversity, and identify what other location options may be available for the future.

Yujin Gakuen Japanese Immersion

The Review Team concluded Yujin Gakuen is very much aligned with its original mission and focus, that its Japanese language immersion program is systematically and effectively implemented throughout the school, grades K through 5, and that it does represent a distinctive strategy for achieving the board’s educational goals. The school has shown consistently strong enrollment and high achievement, demonstrates continued strong parent and staff interest and commitment, and, it remains viable as a separate school in its current configuration as a co-located alternative school. They suggest that the Yujin Gakuen/Corridor co-location model (i.e., alternative/alternative) be considered as a possible model for future relocations of other alternative schools. Yujin Gakuen’s student population is relatively diverse in terms of SES, race/ethnicity and ELL, but it falls below district averages for special education. However, the Review Team also noted it was not clear, how, and to what extent, Yujin Gakuen welcomes and supports the broader diversity of cultures and families represented in their community.

I concur with the findings and conclusions of the Review Team and recommend that in addition to the elimination of grade-level caps for Yujin Gakuen, the following actions be approved by the board:

1. No Change in Status. Through this action, the board supports the continuation of Yujin Gakuen as a strong, viable and effective language immersion school.
2. No formal Plan for Improvement, but an expressed expectation that district staff work with Yujin Gakuen to develop strategies to address the key findings of the report related to attracting and addressing the instructional needs of special education students.
3. Direct staff to consider as part of the current strategic planning process, Shaping 4J’s Future, whether the current location of Yujin Gakuen at the Silver Lea site is the optimal location, and identify what other location options may be available for the future. Also, include consideration of possible relocation of Yujin Gakuen from Silver Lea site to a standalone site, or retaining it at Silver Lea site as a standalone alternative school similar to Charlemagne at Fox Hollow.
Additional Comments:

The Review Team noted that while co-location is not a substantial issue at Yujin Gakuen/Corridor, sharing space still represents an ongoing challenge. And, although they suggest that the Yujin Gakuen/Corridor co-location model be considered as a possible model for future relocations of other alternative schools, they recognize there are some other issues not related to the relationships that I believe warrant additional exploration and consideration for the future. While neither school would be regarded as large on its own (they are both at or above 250 students, which is larger than many of our standalone neighborhood elementary schools), together they do stress building facilities and systems. While cooperative strategies like staggering daily schedules can clearly help, issues like parking, drop-off areas, and accommodating recess will always be challenging. Of more concern to me, however, is the intersection of traffic, safety, neighborhood, and environmental concerns that come together by virtue of having a high school and two alternative schools essentially sharing the same block. This is particularly true when one thinks of the high concentrations of vehicles brought together in one place as a result of high school drivers and alternative school parents all converging on Silver Lane.

Corridor

The Review Team concluded that Corridor is very much aligned with its original mission and focus. Its educational program, consisting of a basic curriculum supplemented and enhanced by a systematically applied schedule of daily electives, represents a distinctive strategy for achieving the board’s educational goals, and it’s decision-making process effectively involves parents and staff in school governance and differs from processes used in other schools. They concluded that full enrollment indicates continued strong interest among parents, with high levels of parent involvement and staff commitment. However, they did not observe any indications that the school would be welcoming to students and families from backgrounds differing from the majority of its current students and families. They recommend Corridor explore these challenges with the assistance of district staff in the following three areas: expanding instruction techniques, examining school culture, and addressing community perceptions. They note there are no significant tensions between Corridor and Yujin Gakuen that present challenges to their co-location, and conclude that Corridor remains viable as a separate school in its current configuration as a co-located alternative school.

I concur with the findings and conclusions of the Review Team and recommend that in addition to the elimination of grade-level caps for Corridor that the following actions be approved by the board:

1. No Change in Status. Through this action, the board supports the continuation of Corridor as a strong, viable and effective language immersion school, and preserves its distinctive strategy as part of the district’s program of school choice.
2. No formal Plan for Improvement, but an expressed expectation that district staff work with Corridor to develop strategies to address the key findings of the report related to attracting and addressing the instructional needs of a more diverse student population, including low SES, ELL and students of color.
3. Direct staff to consider as part of the current strategic planning process, Shaping 4J’s Future, whether the current location of Corridor at the Silver Lea site is the optimal location, and identify what other location options may be available for the future. Include consideration of possible relocation of Corridor from Silver Lea site to a standalone site, or retaining it at Silver Lea site as a standalone alternative school.
Additional Comments:

See comments related to Yujin Gakuen.

* Note: Plan for Improvement will be completed in the fall of 2007, and follow-up reviews, where required, will be conducted by February 1, 2008. Recommendations do not imply the provision of additional funding or supplemental resources, other than those associated with planning for and supporting any approved change in status, such as relocation, merger, etc.

Superintendent Russell assured those offering testimony at the earlier public hearing that he believed that the immersion schools were valuable, which the alternative schools report reflected, and the board would soon be considering the establishment of a fourth immersion school.

Mr. Martinez recalled the board’s discussion of eliminating grade level caps the previous year to make sure students past the early kindergarten or first grade also had the opportunity to attend alternative programs. He was unsure that the issue was the same for the language immersion programs. He suggested that eliminating grade level caps for those programs might decrease access for second, third, and fourth grade students as students entering the lottery would largely be first graders, statistically lessening the chance those students would be selected. Mr. Martinez asked Superintendent Russell to look at the lottery data to determine if that was an issue.

Superintendent Russell said he thought there was a possibility the team might have recommended keeping the grade level caps in the immersion schools. He said that Mr. Henry could attempt to get the data, but if there was a possibility of such a recommendation it would be for the immersion schools for the reasons mentioned by Mr. Martinez. Mr. Henry said the vast majority of applicants to the immersion schools were generally in the first grade. The point Mr. Martinez made could turn out to be true, but there were few openings in the upper grades so very few people apply. He said the point was well-taken.

Ms. Mehas said the team did not discuss the statistical probability of such students being selected. It talked about equity and if those applying would be able to learn the language when they were in the fourth grade. Parents willing to try that generally had a greater commitment to the program.

Mr. Martinez said he continued to be concerned about the issue.

Speaking to the issue of grade level caps, Ms. Webber-Davis said when her family moved to Eugene and started her child in Buena Vista, he had missed a year that other children had completed, resulting in 1-1/2 years of tutoring, which was not inexpensive. If the board was looking at access for all SES levels, that was one consideration, and she suggested the community might need education about what that might mean. One could truly disadvantage a child if not committed to making such a system work.

Mr. Forrest said another issue related to the grade level cap concerned fairness and equity with other schools and for administrators and teachers about what other schools deal with in regard to grade level fluctuations. As long as the district co-located schools, he thought that would be an issue. He agreed that access was very important, but other equity issues continued to exist.

Mr. Forrest was pleased to hear the superintendent, through his recommendations, reaffirm that co-location did not work between alternative and neighborhood schools.
Ms. Hayes expressed appreciation for all the work that went into the report. She was concerned about the diversity of students in the alternative schools. She noted her own son’s attendance at Buena Vista and said the information in the report reflected discussions that were had by parents at the school. She acknowledged the delicacy of the issue as the board also believed the immersion programs added to the cultural competency of the community and schools. Ms. Hayes said there was a lot of work to do, and it was work that must be done by the community, not just school staff.

Mr. Smith said he shared some of Mr. Martinez’s concerns about the caps. He wanted to see more of the data the team saw, and invited any thoughts as to how the caps would really apply.

Mr. Hermann said he had not been excited about the potential of “blowing up” grade level caps when the subject was first discussed and even less excited about it now for the reasons raised then and for the reason raised by Mr. Martinez. He indicated he would ask staff to examine the data from Fox Hollow, which the board knew was overscribed in regard to kindergarten, and assume that X number of people apply to first grade; what did that do to the kindergarten class? He would also like more detail about the conclusions related to Hillside as compared to the conclusions about Corridor.

Approve an Amendment in the Purchase and Sales Agreement for the Santa Clara Site

Sue Prichard recapped the status of the purchase and sales agreement for the sale of the Santa Clara School property to West Management LLC and Hult LLC. She called attention to a new contingency regarding the potential the City of Eugene would impose a value-added tax to fund Ballot Measure 37 claims, which would have a major negative impact on the purchaser’s ability to buy the property. The board had entered into an addendum with the purchaser to find a way to pay the fee, even if imposed after the purchase and sales agreement was completed and the sale closed. She said staff had reviewed a new draft of the new agreement and was working on the approvals for the underlying agreement. With the board’s approval, staff would continue to negotiate with the purchaser toward an agreement.

Jon Lauch said the value-added charge would impose a 25 percent fee on the increased property value supposedly realized through a zone change plan amendment. The impact of that charge was estimated to be around $850,000 to $1.5 million in the worst-case scenario. The City had not passed an ordinance yet and had referred the issue to a technical work group that would develop a recommendation by the end of March. In the absence of a recommendation, the council would reconsider the ordinance. The ordinance would also impact the district’s agreement with the Santa Clara Grange, and staff would need to update the agreement as well. The grange had agreed it was a legitimate expense. He said staff would also have to clarify how escrow worked around that agreement.

Mr. Lauch reviewed key elements of the agreement regarding the Santa Clara School property.

The board voiced no objection to continued negotiations.

Comments and Committee Reports

Dr. Webber-Davis said she attended the Oregon Business Summit, which focused on sustainability and distinctiveness for the State of Oregon. There was much emphasis placed on transportation and a better prepared work force.
Dr. Webber-Davis said before the holidays she had participated in a meeting of statewide stakeholders on teacher mentoring. The bottom line of the gathering was to get behind the governor’s budget proposal for a teacher mentoring program. She hoped the district reaped the benefits if the proposal was successful.

Mr. Forrest and Mr. Smith both welcomed Ms. Hayes.

Adjourn

Mr. Hermann adjourned the meeting at 8:38 p.m.

______________________________  _______________________
George Russell                    Tom Herrmann
District Clerk                    Board Chair

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)