

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

**March 12, 2008**

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a regular meeting at 6 p.m., followed by a work session on March 12, 2008, 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 March 7, 2008, and published in *The Register-Guard* on March 10, 2008.

**ROLL CALL**

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Charles Martinez, Jr., Chair (by telephone)  
Beth Gerot, Vice Chair  
Craig Smith  
Eric Forrest  
Alicia Hays  
Jim Torrey  
Yvette Webber-Davis

**STAFF:**

George Russell, Superintendent of Schools and District Clerk  
Tom Henry, Deputy Superintendent & Chief Academic Officer  
Barbara Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Communications Director  
Susan Fahey, Chief Financial Officer  
Jon Lauch, Director of Facilities Management  
Laurie Moses, Director of High School Services  
Larry Sullivan, Director of Educational Support Services

**MEDIA:**

KRVM  
Anne Williams, *Register-Guard*

**CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND FLAG SALUTE**

Board Vice Chair Beth Gerot called the board meeting of the School District 4J Board of Directors to order and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**AGENDA REVIEW**

There were no agenda changes.

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

Superintendent George Russell reviewed the progress of *Shaping 4J's Future*, summarizing what he felt was an emerging consensus based on the discussion at the board's work session on March 8. He noted that the board had asked him to provide alternative options in the Eastside and Harris proposal, the Charlemagne French immersion relocations, and the Buena Vista Spanish Immersion relocation. He went over his revised recommendations and the

alternative options, using a Power Point presentation, and stressing that all recommendations were options at this point in the process.

#### **ITEMS RAISED BY EMPLOYEE GROUPS**

**Paul Duchin**, Co-President of the Eugene Education Association (EEA), said EEA members had adopted a policy to address issues raised by the 4J Access and Options Initiative from January 31, 2005 that still rang true as the district considered *Shaping 4J's Future*. He quoted the policy regarding school choice and closing the achievement gap and allowing all students equal access to education options. He said EEA encouraged the superintendent and board to enhance all 4J schools by dedicating additional resources to schools based on SES, developing systems in the district schools to create equitable populations and class-size distributions for all schools, and considering weighted staffing for students with special needs. He said some of those components were now incorporated with district initiatives, and with *Shaping 4J's Future*, EEA anticipated having some of its original guidelines becoming part of the new initiative. The organization was aware that the board's decisions might have unintended consequences. With the declining student population, the competition for students to attend 4J schools may become more intense.

**Merri Steele**, Co-President of EEA, said the organization had decided not to take a position on *Shaping 4J's Future*, because Superintendent Russell was highly skilled at piecing together the district mosaic. She urged the board to continue its thoughtful review of considerations for all schools as it moved toward its decision.

#### **ITEMS RAISED BY THE AUDIENCE**

**Chad Ruhoff**, 3951 Mirror Pond, a product of 4J with a degree in Chinese studies at Pacific Lutheran University, moved abroad for two years to study at Szechuan University. He had seen when he lived there the important impact China would have on the world and believed equipping children with the ability to speak and work in Chinese was important. He urged the district to make a Chinese immersion school part of *Shaping 4J's Future* and not to wait. He had three children who would be learning Chinese elsewhere if 4J did not offer it.

**Guanghong Atman**, Eugene, came from China over a dozen years ago and felt privileged to have observed both cultures as an adult. She believed the two countries had much to share with each other and that the Chinese immersion program was critical to the future of kids in 4J. She noted that Chinese public schools had made English or some other foreign language mandatory in the 1970s, 25 years later Eugene was debating the feasibility of a Chinese immersion program. She questioned the feasibility of not having a Chinese immersion program and felt it was necessary to equip kids with resources necessary to understand a rising culture with one quarter of the world's population.

**Anne Donahue**, 2090 Van Buren, president of Adams PTA, said parents and staff had met for their first visioning meeting and had come up with a list of questions to guide next steps. She said Adams was one of the strongest schools in the district, modeling diverse choices and welcoming to non-traditional families while attracting one fifth of its students from outside neighborhood boundaries. She said more Adams families favored Spanish over Chinese.

**Andrew Grenville**, 1925 Fairmount, thanked Superintendent Russell for meeting with the Chinese immersion group the previous day and restated what he had told them about positive steps underway. He outlined three phases: A feasibility study conducted last year by the University of Oregon Center for Applied Language Studies (CASLS) through a federal grant; a design phase this year with the goal of submitting a concrete proposal in May, with start-up

targeted for 2009-10. He expressed disappointment that the program would not start in 2008 but was heartened by the steps being taken. He urged the board to seize the moment.

**Kay Shaver**, 2611 Garfield Street, parent of a 2½ year old, lived in the Churchill region but said she would drive anywhere to put her child in a Chinese immersion school. She said China was well-positioned to become a source of knowledge in all fields, and she felt the Chinese immersion program was essential to prepare the next generation. She pointed to intense local interest in the program and asked for a K-12 program.

**Misa Joo**, Eugene, wanted to be clear about wanting both Chinese and Spanish immersion schools. She noted the effects of language immersion schools on the community and felt the Chinese and dual-Spanish immersion programs could be a crowning jewel.

**Sara Michener**, 1243 Hayes, had studied Chinese at the Eugene Chinese School and wanted the community to help kids learn Chinese easily by providing an immersion program.

**Maggie Bosworth**, 3047 Whitbeck Boulevard, parent of boys in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades, urged the board to postpone a decision regarding high school enrollment caps. She wanted to hear more discussion about what made South Eugene High School so strong and questioned why the district was trying to maintain four high schools with declining enrollment instead of downsizing to three that could become stronger.

**Brenda Monroe**, 2635 Onyx, a teacher at Family School, asked the board to carefully consider the articulate, heartfelt comments of parents from schools facing closure. She said emotions were running high as families faced closure of their schools, which often were the center of their social and neighborhood lives. Regarding transportation issues, she thought it did not make financial sense to bus four students from River Road to South Eugene just to provide transportation to alternative school kids, but it would make sense to transport kids in hubs.

**Stanley Micklavzina**, 475 Sunnyside Drive, thought that before the district started capping schools, it needed to figure out ways to make other high schools magnets. He felt that North's International High School (IHS) - Small School program, compared to the IHS for the other 4J schools, did not offer as much of a challenge. His family left North for South because South was the only school teaching German. He thought the district should look at why people wanted to go to South and apply some of those programs, such as languages, at the other schools before putting a cap on enrollment. He noted that a number of students went from North to South because of its strong theater program.

Ms. Gerot acknowledged that the board had received Harris survey information and adjourned the regular board meeting to begin a work session.

The board took a short break.

## **WORK SESSION ON THE SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR *SHAPING 4J's FUTURE***

Ms. Gerot called the work session to order.

Board Chair Charles Martinez joined the work session by telephone.

Superintendent Russell reviewed the written Summary of Revised Recommendations and Alternative Options he had introduced earlier, calling attention to the district-wide strategies that there seemed to be momentum around.

Ms. Gerot suggested going through each recommendation to see if board members had additional thinking or questions, noting that many of the recommendations had been discussed extensively in the board's work session on March 8.

### **1. Differentiated staffing.**

The recommendation proposed developing differentiated staffing ratio strategies in 2008-09 and implementing them in 2009-10.

There were no additional comments.

### **2. Limit transfers from another region into middle and high schools to 5% and 7½%, respectively, by 2009-10.**

In response to a question from Board Member Jim Torrey, Tom Henry, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer, said there was not an intention to have people change schools, but every time students changed levels, from elementary to middle school or middle school to high school, they had to enter the school choice lottery.

Superintendent Russell wanted to be clear that if 4J limited transfers in, the number of people who could move could be less than in the past. He said it had always been the policy to reapply when changing levels.

Mr. Henry pointed out that the district had been managing enrollment by limiting transfers for the last two years.

Board Member Yvette Webber-Davis wanted to clarify that students in the language immersion schools did not have to reapply when changing levels.

Board Member Alicia Hays noted that those students did not count toward the 5%.

Ms. Gerot commented that with fewer kids being allowed to transfer into a middle school, the demand on the high schools would decrease as well, because students generally stayed on the same track.

Mr. Henry said the district was putting a lot of effort into K-12 learning communities, so there would be a more natural flow from middle school to high school.

Ms. Hays wanted to know more about sibling preference.

Mr. Henry said the district had priorities for transfers in alternative schools. Students who moved out of the school area were transferred automatically. Siblings of co-enrolled students who had been at the school for a year were second priority. All other students were third priority. Last year, the board had established a preference for neighborhood attendance, so that a student living in the South region would get first preference for attending South IHS. He said the district had done the same thing for the Arts and Technology Academy (ATA).

Mr. Torrey wondered how long it would take for this policy to have a dramatic impact on the high schools.

Mr. Henry said the high school 7½% transfer restriction would start in 2009-10, and it would take four years to reach its full effect.

Mr. Torrey asked about staffing levels. Mr. Henry said the current way of staffing meant that teachers followed students, and as schools lost enrollment, staff would also be reduced, resulting in a loss of program.

Board Member Eric Forrest commented that the board had heard loud and clear that people wanted more high schools and had tried to work within that confine. He said North Eugene would stay about the same size, South Eugene would lose a little less than 200 students, Sheldon would lose 100 and Churchill would gain some students. He said those would still be decent-sized high schools that would be able to have good programs. He felt the transfer restrictions would be the equitable thing to do, given the community's desire for four high schools.

### **3. Boundaries—review the boundaries in 2008-09 and propose adjustments by February 2009 for 2009-10.**

No comments or questions.

### **4. Transportation**

Superintendent Russell said the board had made it clear at its Saturday work session that most of the board was not interested in providing transportation just to alternative schools within a region and wanted to study the possibility of providing transportation to all schools within each region, including neighborhood schools families might choose.

In response to a query from Mr. Torrey, Jon Lauch, Director of Facilities Management, said students could get transportation on an established route if space was available and at an already established stop.

Mr. Forrest liked where things were heading before and thought it made the most sense to try providing transportation to alternative schools in one region. He noted that many alternative school parents had indicated a lack of transportation prevented the schools from increasing diversity, and he wanted to find out what would happen. He went back to the need to support neighborhood schools and worried about unintended consequences of providing transportation to all schools.

Board Member Craig Smith supported a study of all possibilities.

Dr. Martinez agreed with Mr. Forrest and Mr. Smith and thought it was important to pursue transportation barriers to alternative schools' ability to attract more diverse populations, but did not want to set up a dynamic where alternative schools were the only version of choice by limiting transportation to alternative schools.

Dr. Webber-Davis wanted to look at the wealth of possibilities with their associated costs.

## **5. North Region**

Superintendent Russell reviewed options in the North Region, and noted the latest recommendation had returned to maintaining existing schools at Howard and River Road.

Mr. Torrey said he had agreed that consolidating Howard and River Road was not a good idea, but he felt the district needed to make an investment in that part of Eugene with a new school.

## **6. Churchill Region**

Superintendent Russell pointed to the recommendation about exploring a Chinese immersion or dual language immersion at Adams, and comments from Adams people this evening that their priority was staying a neighborhood school.

Mr. Torrey wondered how the district would go about looking for other sites for the immersion school, if it were not to be housed at Adams. Superintendent Russell said it would depend in part on the proposal that came forth for the immersion school. He believed, as he felt the board did, that ideally, the immersion school should be in the Churchill region to fulfill the board's desire to have immersion schools spread across all four regions.

Superintendent Russell thought the Adams folks were saying they might be interested in looking at some kind of language program, but not an immersion or collocated alternative school. When asked about other elementary schools in the region, he said he would not want to put an immersion school at Twin Oaks or Crest Drive because he did not want to create another French immersion situation.

Mr. Smith said all the current examples of immersion schools suggested collocation. The superintendent said another collocation with a neighborhood school would not fly with him. He was considering conversion of a neighborhood school over the years or collocation with another alternative school.

Mr. Smith had appreciated comments from parents at Adams and felt it was critical to listen to what people wanted and respond to that. Ms. Gerot agreed that it was important to listen to what people would like to see that would encourage them to attend their neighborhood school.

Mr. Forrest commented that the message from Adams families sounded much like messages from families in other schools: They were good schools doing good things. He wanted to celebrate that 4J schools were doing good things, while pointing out that this was a prime example of too many buildings, too few kids, and too many competing opportunities. He believed that the district needed to provide leadership to balance schools out and also to give Adams people the chance to talk to their neighborhood about what might draw families back into their school.

Superintendent Russell pointed to the recommendation of moving Family School as a 1-8 school to share a facility with Arts and Technology Academy at the Jefferson building, beginning in 2009-10. He noted that the intent was that ATA and Family School have time to talk about all the issues next year. He reviewed other implications for Parker and Spencer Butte, depending on what happened with the Harris/Eastside consolidation.

Mr. Smith clarified that this would site two alternative schools in one facility and asked whether Family School would have its own schedule or would follow the ATA modified schedule.

Superintendent Russell said that would need to be discussed. Ms. Gerot wanted to know how the ATA schedule had worked.

Mr. Forrest noted that throughout the process, he had been worried about helping to grow the program at Churchill and wondered how collocating ATA and Family School and having one traditional middle school, Kennedy, would help feed enough students to Churchill.

Mr. Henry said the plan in putting Family School K-8 was that the 75-90 kids now going to Spencer Butte could feed into Churchill alternative schools. ATA would have an additional 75 students and were around 200 in the middle level. If Kennedy was in the 500 range, that would be 875 middle level kids, or about the number living in the region. He said that was about the same number as in the South region.

## **7. Sheldon Region**

Superintendent Russell reviewed the revised recommendations for postponing a decision on closing Coburg until February 2009. There were no board comments.

The superintendent reviewed the revised recommendation for making Meadowlark a stand-alone school and allowing the school to continue to grow. He noted that the board had expressed interest in putting in a modular building to facilitate growth.

After some discussion, Dr. Martinez said there was a strong board sentiment in that direction, but he felt it would be overly prescriptive to add that to the recommendation. Mr. Smith agreed, adding that it would be acceptable to say it could include modular buildings, with the understanding that the modulars would be a bridge until a new school could be built. Ms. Gerot agreed.

The superintendent did not think modulars should be added to accommodate transfers because transfers came from somewhere else.

Mr. Forrest disagreed with Superintendent Russell and wanted to allow Meadowlark to continue recruiting more students because there were not a lot of choices available in the Sheldon region.

Dr. Martinez agreed with Mr. Forrest. He thought the district should be careful to allow Meadowlark to thrive and felt that restraining growth would set up a future problem for the school. He wanted to tread carefully around board prescriptions.

Mr. Smith felt that determining capital expenditures based on allowing transfers to a school was backwards.

Mr. Forrest reiterated that 4J kept saying it was a choice district, but there were not a lot of choices in the Sheldon district. He thought capital investment made sense where schools were growing.

Ms. Hays and Ms. Gerot supported letting the school grow and leaving specifics to a later time.

## 8. South Region

Superintendent Russell reported that Harris and Eastside teachers had met the previous day, then he had met with them today. He had been impressed with their commitment, even though they had reservations. He still had concerns regarding whether a consolidation between the two would work, but he trusted the teachers to come up with a model that would work, if they were left alone. He thought his original recommendation to close Harris and relocate Eastside to the Harris building still made the most sense, when considering the big picture in the South region. For him, the possibility of both schools closing if a consolidation did not work needed to be clearly on the table.

Mr. Torrey believed there was a chance to create a role model school.

Mr. Forrest had visited Harris and been impressed. His gut told him the consolidation would work out. His worry was that the result would be a great school that would pull students from Parker. He noted that there were not enough kids in the South region to keep all schools going and he thought the superintendent's original recommendation had been the right one, even though he did not want to say that, because Harris was a great school.

Mr. Smith preferred couching the outcome with some uncertainty and basing the decision on people on both sides putting forth their best efforts. His fallback would be the superintendent's first alternative, which would include the survival of Eastside.

Mr. Torrey thought an even playing field was vital, and Eastside must integrate more diversity. He saw this as a way to make that happen.

Dr. Martinez agreed with other board members in feeling unsettled about this one. For him, embracing the current revised recommendation would require the district to have confidence that the process was not designed in some manner to indirectly take action to close these schools. He felt the district must commit to this in good faith, with the confidence that it was likely to succeed. He was worried about the tentative way the superintendent described his sense of possibility of his revised recommendation working. He was equally unsettled with the alternatives, especially since this process had shed light on uncertainties about the future of Eastside and its viability.

Ms. Gerot felt much the same way as Dr. Martinez.

Dr. Webber-Davis agreed that this was one of the more difficult decisions the board was being asked to make. She noted that according to the superintendent's calendar, the Charlemagne French Immersion School would move from Fox Hollow in 2010-11 to a new location somewhere in the South region, and those students would continue to feed into South Eugene's French immersion program. She said the board had heard consistently over the last several weeks about community interest in a Chinese immersion school, but did not hear that Adams families wanted that school there. She noted that language programs were built on cohorts, so it would be possible to have a Chinese and French immersion school in one cohort, with one going off to one high school and the other feeding into another regional high school. She wanted to look at the possibility of a consolidation that would be more creative.

Superintendent Russell agreed that there were clearly a number of options. He said he did not lack confidence in the teachers at Harris or Eastside, but he did wonder whether they could come up with a solution that was sustainable. He saw a list of barriers that was much longer than the positives, but had been encouraged by the openness of Eastside teachers.

Dr. Webber-Davis stressed that there were other components beyond the staffs of the two schools.

Ms. Hays also was not sure what to do. She appreciated Mr. Forrest's comments about the data. She said the intent of the recommendation derived from declining enrollment in the South region, and she did not want to end up here in three years; if so, she wanted to deal with it now.

Superintendent Russell noted that even with boundary adjustments, Mr. Forrest's point was that the district would still end up with less students. For the South region, the question in his mind was whether five 250-student elementary schools were acceptable, and whether those schools would accept not having programs and services.

Mr. Torrey liked the fact that the pressure had caused Eastside to find a way to make it work. He thought there was a chance to make a great school with 350 kids from Harris and Eastside.

Mr. Forrest agreed but wanted to turn attention back to the basics. He said there was a reason the district ended up with the tenets it had adopted for *Shaping 4J's Future*: The district had more kids with more needs, including ELL kids, who needed extra attention. He pointed out that the 350-student minimum for elementary schools would give a big enough scale to provide for kids with extra needs. He worried that if the board started tweaking the part that it did not like, without regard for the foundational principles, chaos would be created.

Dr. Martinez appreciated the conversation and noted that the superintendent and Mr. Forrest were strongly advocating for the original recommendation. He worried about a move for Eastside, if there were questions about its long-term viability. He would need to know more about that to return to the original recommendation.

Superintendent Russell believed the first recommendation would be best in terms of overall context, and he saw the possibility of a really strong program coming out of a Harris-Eastside merger. He needed to reflect on the issues that had been raised about each side.

Dr. Webber-Davis pointed out that if the board went back to the original recommendation, the district would be looking at adding two modulars for the French immersion school in the region of the district with declining enrollment, while the new recommendation would save \$700,000.

Mr. Forrest said for him, it was not so much about the money and noted that the district would have an asset in the Fox Hollow school that would more than counterbalance that. He thought Willard was the right site for Eastside and the French immersion school in the long term.

The group went over costs for various scenarios at different school buildings.

Ms. Hays commented that when looking at the whole thing she was having a hard time, because there were good things about all of the schools. She said Eastside was committed to diversifying, and the merger would give them the opportunity, but there was a cost to that, and that was the challenge. She stressed that closing Harris and moving Eastside would not ensure Eastside's future.

Superintendent Russell observed that in fairness, there would be a cost to all the options.

Ms. Gerot noted that the issue was very complex, and she knew all of the board would be considering the matter carefully over the next week. She looked forward to the superintendent's thoughts at the next meeting.

Superintendent Russell went over the options available for Charlemagne, the French immersion school, and said he hoped the board would stay committed to relocating the school to a location that was more accessible to more students.

Mr. Torrey thought the better job the district did in making the immersion schools accessible to a broader range of people, the more 4J would be offering true choice.

Mr. Smith said he would not be at the next meeting, and he was as troubled as everyone else on the Harris/Eastside issue.

## **ADJOURN**

Ms. Gerot adjourned the work session at 8:45 p.m.

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George Russell  
District Clerk

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Charles Martinez, Jr.  
Board Chair

(Recorded by Susan Wulfekuhler)

### **Attachments to Official Minutes:**

1. Summary of Superintendent's Revised Recommendations & Alternative Options – March 12, 2008