The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a work session at 6 p.m. on September 20, 2010, at the Education Center, 200 North Monroe Street, Eugene, Oregon. Notice of the meeting was mailed to the media on September 17, 2010.

ROLL CALL

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

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
Sara Cramer, Director of Elementary Services
Randy Bernstein, Resource Principal, South Eugene High School
Jeff Johnson, Resource Principal, Arts and Technology Academy
Denisa Taylor, Resource Principal, Chavez Elementary
Larry Williams, Resource Principal, Edgewood Elementary
Kerry Delf, Communications Coordinator

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:
Sun Sun Gan, Churchill High School

MEDIA:
Anne Williams, Register Guard

CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND FLAG SALUTE

Mr. Smith called the meeting of the Eugene School District 4J Board of Directors to order, called the roll, and led the flag salute.

WORK SESSION: Establish or affirm proposed district values, goals and priorities for the superintendent to use as parameters in developing draft scenarios for achieving the board’s goal of a sustainable budget.

Superintendent Russell offered a PowerPoint presentation entitled Eugene School District 4J Values, Goals & Priorities. He noted his goal was to bring a sustainable budget proposal to the board by February 2011. The optimal instructional program to meet the board values, goals and priorities cannot be attained, nor could the current level of programs and services be sustained,
within the current fiscal climate. The district could not afford to do all the important things it wanted to do, and trade-offs would have to be made. He observed that both the Community Thought Leaders and District Thought Leaders, although they may not agree on everything, agreed the district was looking at a new normal and things would not be turning around in the near future.

Superintendent Russell noted 85 percent of the district’s general fund costs were people costs and the district would need to find new ways of compensating staff and designing instruction as it moved forward. He opined that the board would spend an inordinate amount of time discussing closures and consolidations, which would produce only a small fraction of the needed savings. A key issue for him was recognition that limited resources would be available and the board wanted to target those limited resources, including people, time and money, and with an emphasis on student achievement. The district faced many mandated requirements, but costs were driven by how requirements were carried out rather than by the requirements themselves. It may no longer be feasible to do the best job possible.

Superintendent Russell directed board members to the district values, goals and priorities included in the agenda packet and facilitated a discussion based on a Value to Impact Grid illustrated in the agenda packet. He asked the board to consider establishing a Hierarchy of Values, Goals and Priorities with the associated beliefs and values to be used by the superintendent in priority order for developing scenario options for a sustainable budget suggested in the agenda packet. The work session was intended to allow for board members to discuss the proposed hierarchy and to determine where it agreed or disagreed with the superintendent’s suggested hierarchy, and to make any changes it saw fit.

Mr. Torrey averred there was agreement that the highest priority was to increase achievement for all students. If this was in fact the highest priority, the board needed to determine how this would be achieved and how it would be funded. This would result in dropping lower level priorities. He emphasized the importance of continued assessment of students as well as adequate resources to enable students to succeed after assessment.

In response to a question from Superintendent Russell, Mr. Hermanns explained the EZ CBM assessment program was in place for elementary students and in process for middle school students. Staff were examining how best to monitor students at the high school level.

Mr. Torrey supported athletics in the schools, and believed it provided support for students in the district who may not be in school if it was not for these programs. He thought the community would rally around funding programs associated with high school athletics if it was not in the district’s budget.

Mr. Smith opined athletics was not an incentive for all student athletes to remain in school, and suggested art and music also offered that incentive. He asked if the number of students impacted would be sufficient to make a difference in the cost savings.

Ms. Gerot asked if the district focused on the instructional core of highly qualified teachers providing a relevant and rigorous curriculum to all kids with the support they needed, would it be sufficient to provide the necessary support and incentives for kids who only attended school to satisfy attendance requirements to participate in athletics.

Ms. Geller stated having a rich, well rounded curriculum that provided every student the opportunity to be prepared for the future came next for her. This included science, history,
foreign language and writing. She asserted there could be no equity without excellence because students were not prepared for what came next after high school. Ms. Gerot said professional development should be included in priority one.

Mr. Hermanns stated while the district was short on money, it was rich in human capital in its realization and potential, with a significant amount of talent at all levels throughout the district. It was necessary to provide professional development opportunities and time to achieve that potential.

Ms. Levis agreed with the values cited in priority 1, and asked how they could be achieved to get the most out of any resources invested.

Mr. Hermanns expressed interest in collapsing priorities 1, 2 and 3. He noted the district could not afford to do everything identified in those priorities, but when parsed down, there were parts of each priority that intersected and interacted. He emphasized the value of collaborating with the University of Oregon (UO) and other community members and organizations, to bring expertise in different areas to serve the needs of the students.

Mr. Torrey asked if distance learning could be used for some enrichment programs for students that the district no longer had the capacity to provide. He asserted there were qualified teachers in the district who could teach those programs. He said the current economic conditions called for a reset of expectations, noting additional funding from Congress would be limited.

Ms. Gerot added virtual learning was an important component. She said conversations were occurring at the community college level in the state to examine how to better align K-12 and community colleges to provide opportunities, particularly for accelerated students who did not need to be in the high schools their senior year, to free up resources. Career/technical education was being discussed to determine if there was a way to ensure students had opportunities at the community colleges that could not be offered through the public schools.

Ms. Hayes emphasized the importance of helping students learn how to take online courses if that would be a focus of their education in the future.

Ms. Walston said choice was important and was one way to ensure that all students would be successful. She wondered if the fiscal reality prohibited offering too much choice. She added more choice should be offered at the high school level and less choice at the elementary level.

Ms. Levis asked who would identify high priority/high impact priorities and how the board would make choices. It was important for the board to provide the tools for district staff to enable them to develop options for board consideration.

Superintendent Russell responded if the board agreed with the priorities identified by staff, staff would begin to further research them and develop scenarios for board review and decision. He hoped to have a prioritized order at the end of tonight’s meeting.

Mr. Torrey asserted the State legislature should be asked if it was seriously considering how it could help districts throughout the state. He asked if there were existing laws and regulations that hindered the board’s ability to make changes and do things differently. He did not hold out hope, however, that the district would receive windfall funding from the legislature in the near future.
Superintendent Russell said the board’s conversation reinforced for him that the “devil is in the
details” when developing scenarios for consideration by the board.

Ms. Levis asked where special education and TAG fit into the discussion.

Superintendent Russell said the district had built a culture of expectation providing one-on-one
aides for special education students, which was a significant cost and needed to be studied to
determine if there was a better way to support students.

Mr. Hermanns said the district continued to have more difficult kids move to the district, noting
that people moved to the district because the district did a good job with special needs students.
He added the State had an 11 percent funding cap. The district had more special education
students than the cap provided for, and thus did not receive additional State funding for all
special education students.

Ms. Gerot said teachers were doing incredible work with a wide range of students throughout
the district and she emphasized the importance of supporting those efforts and spreading those
efforts as opposed to services being offered in isolation.

Mr. Torrey stated a key argument in favor of providing services for students in larger settings
was the challenge of affording smaller schools.

Ms. Walston concurred noting the district needed to think more about centralization of site
based management when looking at the variety of choices offered.

Mr. Smith said the district should look at the configuration of the school year and school week,
noting that many of the students were lost over the summer.

Ms. Hayes was concerned that as administration was reduced, the district lost the ability to
support teachers through evaluation. If the gaps were not known, appropriate professional
support could not be offered. She added that the impacts of cuts would have profound impacts
on peoples’ lives and good people would lose their jobs with the size of cuts the district was
facing. It was important for the board to continue to have a commitment to continue to provide
the students with a good educational experience. She noted successful schools were part of a
successful community.

Mr. Torrey stated education was an element of economic development. He asked who would
come to the community if it did not provide the highest quality of education.

Ms. Bellamy announced the board would meet on October 27, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. to focus on the
superintendent profile and the action needed to move forward.

Mr. Smith directed board members to documents in the agenda packet related to the Oregon
Business Association (OBA) Education Committee.

Superintendent Russell directed board members to documents in the agenda packet related to
the Pillars of Success.
ADJOURN

Mr. Smith adjourned the meeting at 8:03 p.m.

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George Russell                 Craig Smith.
District Clerk                 Board Chair

(Recorded by Linda Henry)