

MINUTES

Work Session of the

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Corvallis School District 509J

1555 SW 35th Street

Corvallis, OR 97333

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Rieck called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. in the Board Room of the Central Administration Building, 1555 SW 35th Street, Corvallis, Oregon. The secretary recorded those present as listed below.

<p><u>BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT</u> Kari Rieck, Chair Donna Keim, Vice Chair Matt Donohue Helen Higgins Anne Schuster Blake Rodman</p>	<p><u>EXECUTIVE STAFF PRESENT</u> Dawn Tarzian, Superintendent Jim Hogeboom, Assistant Superintendent Jeanne Holmes, Human Resources Director Brook MacNamara, Student Services Director Julie Catala, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent</p>
<p><u>BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT</u> Nell O'Malley</p>	

A quorum was present and due notice had been published.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Rieck led those present in the pledge of allegiance.

III. SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC) ANNUAL REPORT

Denise Cardinali and Kathy Eckert-Mason, co-chairs of SEAC, led review of the 2006 annual report, a copy of which was given to each board member. (Filed as Supplemental Item #VII-32 in the Official 2006-07 Board Minutes.)

Ms. Eckert-Mason touched on SEAC's 2006 goals:

- Goal 1.** To provide opportunities for students, staff, and parents to learn and communicate about disabilities and Special education processes, services, and law.
- Goal 2.** To seek out opportunities for SEAC members and guests to expand knowledge in areas of Special Education and General Education in order to support more effective collaboration and advocacy.
- Goal 3.** To continue to improve methods of communicating information about educational offerings to interested parties.
- Goal 4.** To support families and students receiving special education services in preparation for transitions from setting to setting.
- Goal 5.** To continue to work with district leadership and special education leadership to follow through on previous work that looks at inclusion of students receiving special education services.
- Goal 6.** To seek out opportunities to support the implementation of activities that supports the School Board Resolution of April 4, 2005 on collaboration between General Education and Special Education.
- Goal 7.** To expand the knowledge of members of SEAC around issues and opportunities in the areas of assistive technology, enabling SEAC members to be better advocates, collaborators, and resources in this important area.

Ms. Eckert-Mason provided highlights of some of the key accomplishments for the year (the details are in the annual report). Her comments included that assistive technology – the use of technology for students at the college level and having them ready for college – is becoming dear to many in SEAC. She said Ms. Cardinali has been working on training around assistive technology and SEAC has also been working with Oregon State University (OSU) to try and get an assistive technology workshop at OSU.

Ms. Cardinali led review of SEAC's goals for 2007:

Goal A

To work with district and special education to look at inclusion and opportunities for more inclusive education across all settings. For students in Life Skills this could include evaluation of how to continue to expand the opportunities for more full inclusion in the general education classroom. For students who are in general education classes receiving special education, this could include looking at the current models for delivery of specially designed instruction that are based on a pull-out model which then requires varying levels of coordination with the general education classroom.

Goal B

To work with district leadership and special education staff to improve and expand the proactive utilization of and access to assistive technology to support the unique needs of students receiving special education. As SEAC members, we will work to expand our knowledge and skills to enable us to be better advocates, collaborators, and resources in this important area.

Goal C

To provide opportunities for students, staff, and parents to learn about various topics related to special education, disabilities, and related topics, recognizing the value and benefit that collaborative learning experience provides.

Ms. Cardinali explained that, in terms of assistive technology, sometimes kids have to leave the classroom to access a computer. Sometimes it requires a high level of self-advocacy for a student to get access to assistive technology and that's a real barrier for some kids.

Ms. Cardinali drew the board's attention to the recommendations/comments section of the annual report, noting that the transition beyond high school is a complex area; district staff is encouraged to participate in statewide conferences. She said SEAC also has concerns about the workload of special education staff; almost every piece of paper that a special education teacher completes ends up as a legally mandated document, which is very stressful.

Ms. Cardinali drew the board's attention to the commendations section of the annual report. Ms. Eckert-Mason pointed out that some of the people commended were outside of the district.

Ms. Cardinali encouraged the district to continue to use focus groups to gain understanding, especially in the areas of transition planning and autism. She noted that the district has experienced a massive increase in autism rates; focus groups could be used to determine whether the services are meeting the needs of teaching staff and families.

In response to a question from Director Keim, Ms. Cardinali said ORPTI is coming out with Response to Intervention (RTI) workshops. Student Services Director Brook MacNamara said a parent presentation is planned for Albany and the Corvallis School District is hoping to have one in April. She reported that tomorrow is the first of four days of intensive RTI training for the six remaining elementary schools that will implement RTI next fall. She added that all the school teams have been expanded to include the early intervening services; all special education teachers and specialists attended a one-day training in the fall. All regular education teachers at each of the pilot schools attended a one-day training as well. Superintendent Tarzian said Director Keim's question reveals knowledge that the board has about RTI; when parents are involved, SEAC's 2006 goal number seven will be fleshed out quite nicely.

Director Rodman referred to SEAC's 2007 Goal A, and asked if SEAC sees the focus on inclusion for Life Skills students as a significant departure from the way things are done now. Ms. Cardinali responded that it's a process that different parents in the district have advocated for; it's an ongoing process that goes up and down in districts that have a segregated delivery model. She added that Goal A is encouraging the continuation of the work that has been going on. She noted that there is a new data point to track elementary level kids who are spending 90-100% of their time in the general classroom.

In response to a question about the role of SEAC, Ms. Cardinali said SEACs were created in statute a long time ago; SEAC members are collaborative advisors with the district.

Chair Rieck noted that time will be allocated at future board meetings for discussion about special education, noting that an agenda request was made for a presentation about autism.

The board thanked Ms. Eckert-Mason and Ms. Cardinali for their presentation.

IV. DISTRICT CALENDAR COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Human Resources Director Jeanne Holmes and Assistant Superintendent Jim Hogeboom addressed the board to share the recommendations of the calendar committee. (Filed as Supplemental Item #IX-1 in the Official 2006-07 Board Minutes.)

Ms. Holmes reported that there were many competing interests in the process, so naturally not everyone could be pleased. Ms. Holmes said the committee was made up of: two parents, representatives of the teachers and classified staffs, an elementary level principal, a secondary level principal, the Student Services Director, the Assistant Superintendent and Ms. Holmes.

Ms. Holmes said that before the committee met, an email was sent to all staff requesting input and principals were asked to collect open-ended input from parents if schools had a parent group meeting around that time. Then the calendar proposal was sent to staff and as many parent list serves as possible. Ms. Holmes noted that feedback varied greatly throughout the process; a lot of feedback was received about this year's winter break dates.

Ms. Holmes said that in order to avoid going through this process every year, the district adopts the framework of the calendar for two or three years.

Features of the 2007-08 calendar proposal:

Mr. Hogeboom said the district's 2006-07 winter break dates were troublesome because they did not coincide with the dates of winter break for LBL ESD (Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District), resulting in unavailability of services for students and inability of staff to attend important meetings with ESD staff. This year the district will align its winter break dates with Philomath and Albany School Districts and with LBL ESD, although Albany and the ESD are just beginning work on their calendars for next year. Staff hopes to have firm dates by the March 12 board meeting at which time the board will be asked to vote on the 2007-08 calendar.

Ms. Holmes said that fall conferences are later to align the elementary and secondary prep. day. She said the downside was that we couldn't schedule conferences over Halloween as many teachers requested, but the calendar committee felt that the alignment issue was more important.

Mr. Hogeboom said one staff development day was added for elementary schools. He said most staff development days are front loaded because of the reading textbook adoption. The

committee is asking for an additional day to assist elementary teachers in learning and using the program effectively. He noted that it is critical that schools let parents know what happens on staff development days and that the collaboration time on those days is key for staff.

Mr. Hogeboom said the committee is still trying to figure out how to provide more collaboration time for elementary and high school teachers; middle schools already have it with their team time in the mornings but elementary and high school teachers don't have that crucial planning time. Some districts do an early release or late start. There isn't anything for that in next year's calendar, but some surrounding districts are considering taking a staff development day and breaking it up over four days or letting kids out early or starting them late. Ms. Holmes said Lebanon is currently doing it and Albany is going to be piloting it. She said the committee will come back to the board next year and talk about what's possible.

Ms. Holmes said the committee did its work on the heels of the three school closures, which had an impact on the members' perspectives. She said that at Superintendent Tarzian's suggestion, the committee made the first semester two days longer than the second semester, knowing that if days must be made up, the first day would most likely be made up on the President's Day non-contract day, as it was this year. Or days would have to be added at the end of the year, which would lengthen second semester.

Ms. Holmes said that in past years, a little box was printed on the calendar noting that days would be made up at the discretion of the superintendent; this year the box will stand out more so that people will understand that it is a possibility and can make their vacation plans for the President's Day weekend accordingly. She added that the information would be communicated in other ways, too.

Ms. Holmes said the last change is that there will be no non-contract day on the Friday before the Labor Day weekend. The rationale is that many staff would prefer to have one day more before they come back to work. Those who feel they need that additional day to work in their classrooms can come in before the first official day back. Ms. Holmes added that classified staff are paid to attend the welcome back event at the end of August, which includes a half day of staff development, but they don't have to come back to work until approximately the middle of the following week, depending on their job. The classified association asked the committee to reduce the distance between the welcome back event and the first work day; this change was one way to address that request.

Ms. Holmes complimented the committee, noting that all stakeholder groups were well represented and the debate among committee members was lively and resulted in a lot of compromising.

Board questions/comments:

Director Higgins asked if giving staff development days eliminates student contact days. Ms. Holmes responded that it does for the elementary level although that level is still solid in terms of the mandated instructional hours. She added that in the teachers' contract, four staff

development days have been bargained; this year, one more was added and the committee will come back to the board regarding it for the next year.

Director Higgins said she has been asked why teachers aren't paid to come in during the summer for staff development. Ms. Holmes said it's part of their 190 day contract. Superintendent Tarzian said teachers need to talk about how students are doing but they need the data that comes throughout the year. Director Higgins recommended adding that information to the communication about why the calendar is set up as it is.

Director Rodman recommended doing a better job of communicating to the public about what happens on staff development days. He said he heard from two-working-parent families who felt their kids weren't in school that much; he asked if future calendar work can include the perspective of those two-working-parent families. Ms. Holmes said the committee tried to cluster those days off as much as possible around weekends; the issue is also about developing more child-care options for kids, which is another conversation that could happen.

Director Donohue said another issue that affects two-working-parent families is snow days; he asked if a hierarchy of days could be implemented, such as "these are the proposed days for winter makeup, to be set at the superintendent's discretion" so families aren't looking at potential free-roaming days. Superintendent Tarzian said that information will be in the "box" that Ms. Holmes referred to earlier.

In response to a question from Director Schuster, Ms. Holmes said Corvallis aligns spring break dates with OSU.

In response to a question from Director Schuster, Superintendent Tarzian said the high schools do not have enough instructional time left to take any more days; 45 minutes must be subtracted from each school day due to the open period because not every student is in class. She added that it is part of the high school schedule discussion.

In response to a question from Chair Rieck, Ms. Holmes said the October 12 staff development date is a state-wide non-conference day for students. Chair Rieck asked for that information to be included in the communication to parents about the calendar.

Extensive discussion ensued regarding the number of non-school days in November. Many scenarios were suggested and staff responded about the requirements of staff for grading and where the quarters end. Chair Rieck noted the strong argument last year for not having a short week prior to winter break, but this calendar proposal has two two-day weeks. She said there are mixed messages about not wanting to split weeks; she recommended giving a consistent message.

Extensive discussion ensued regarding the configuration of conference days in the calendar. Ms. Holmes noted that teachers derive a lot of instructional value from the conferences; certain calendar configurations in the past have resulted in lower attendance at conferences.

Director Higgins said she takes exception with the late-starting winter break, opining that learning stops before winter break begins when it's so late in the month. She said she received a lot of negative feedback about what happened with the calendar this year. Director Donohue recommended including a clear explanation about why these winter break dates were selected. He said the calendar needs to be a two-page document; the second page should be more of an explanation format. Vice Chair Keim recommended including an explanation about the number of instructional hours required by the state.

Superintendent Tarzian said that some of the board's points are valid about partial weeks and that staff will need to pay attention to that issue.

Extensive discussion ensued regarding where the end of the first quarter falls.

Director Rodman extended thanks to the calendar committee for tackling this project and doing such a good job with it. He expressed confidence that the committee has heard everything board members have said and he respects the committee process.

Ms. Holmes reiterated that there was a lot of debate among the committee and this was the best compromise; any recommendation for change is desired quickly because there's a hope that the calendar can be adopted soon.

Director Donohue said his biggest concern is around communication. Chair Rieck said she is concerned that communication isn't getting out wide enough for parental input, noting that if she hadn't been on the board, she wouldn't have been able to give input. She said that many parents from many schools didn't get a chance to give input. Mr. Hogeboom said the parents on the committee did a great job of representing all parents, both for the elementary and secondary levels.

V. BOARD COMMUNICATION WORK GROUP

Director Donohue drew the board's attention to the draft plan, saying that it lays out all the tools the board has for communication to/from stakeholders. The task of the communication work group, composed of Directors Donohue, O'Malley and Schuster, was to look at the plan and make recommendations; the work group obtained feedback from all board members and included input from Superintendent Tarzian regarding implications for staff workload and duplication of effort.

Director Donohue said the draft plan in and of itself is not a communication plan; it's a bunch of tools. How the board will use those tools is as much a communication plan as anything. The work group looked at what will need to happen to have a successful communication plan and

came up with three things: a really good tool kit; decisions about how it will be implemented; and decisions about how the board will develop its media.

1. Tool Kit

Director Donohue said the whole document is the tool kit; these will not create any resource issues for staff. Approving this will just be approving a tool kit.

Chair Rieck said she wants to focus only on the things the board is responsible for and doesn't want to include anything staff is responsible for. She said she'd like to have one document that's just for staff, one that's just for the board, and one that's collaborative.

Director Donohue said the items on the plan relating to staff are there because they're things that are already being done by district staff. He said that when the board considers what it wants in a plan and looks at what is already available to deliver messages, integrating with the district's plan is a good way to avoid a resource drain and to keep messages straight. He clarified that these are just ways the board could disseminate messages.

Superintendent Tarzian said the items on the list are the things being done; the board influenced the list and it has to do with the board's goal to communicate often. She said communication has been enhanced and it's working well. She said she asked Oregon School Boards Association staff member Shannon Priem to look at the plan. She said Ms. Priem commented that the plan should be staffed at 1.5 FTE; the district doesn't staff it at that level. Superintendent Tarzian said she wanted to be clear that we can't add more work to existing staff in this area. She said she understands the board wants to help with communication so that it doesn't all have to be staff; at the same time, she has a concern about unilateral communication for the board – she'd never write something about how the board feels about an issue without checking in with them and vice versa. Superintendent Tarzian said that in terms of the tool kit, it's good for the board to know what's already going on and it's good for the board to provide feedback about what's working and what's not. She said there's a possibility that the board can support staff and enhance our communication; low threat communications would be a good place to start – places where there was a lot of board confidence, such as thanking the community for the levy and gearing up for hiring staff. She added that even those require work with staff to make sure the details are right. Superintendent Tarzian said the board's concerned about adding more staff time and so is she; she also recognizes that the board wants to support the communication effort and is in a good position to do that. She said the question is how.

Director Rodman said that as he looked at the document, he thought that maybe district leadership really wants to do the communicating and the board should be offering suggestions; maybe the board doesn't have a communication role beyond being emissaries/good ambassadors for the district. Superintendent Tarzian said that a board member wondered about writing articles for school newsletters after attending Highlighting Success events. Superintendent Tarzian said she had advised against it because school newsletters really belong to the school and when the district asks permission to include something, it is with the understanding that it may

increase printing costs and stress the school's budget. She said the work group discussed having board members write short paragraphs about the good things they see when they visit schools for Highlighting Success events; it depends on how easily the systems the board puts in place work on touching in with Ms. Holmes or Superintendent Tarzian and then how messages are communicated to schools. Director Rodman said he sees that as more of a case where Superintendent Tarzian or Ms. Holmes ask the board to do it vs. the board saying it wants, as a board, to communicate. He said the plan seemed to indicate that staff is already doing a lot; as he went through the plan he thought maybe the ideal board is kind of invisible.

Vice Chair Keim said the vision process has been good for the board's visibility; groups have said it would be good if there was a weekly or monthly communication from the board or superintendent to let people know what was going on. Vice Chair Keim added that there's another group of citizens who only read letters to the editor and don't hear from the board. She said trying to write an article as a board doesn't work but it would be good if there was a way to reach more people.

Director Donohue pointed out that the board will be taking one vote on the communication plan; not votes on each of the three components.

2. Plan Implementation

Director Donohue said the board communicates with the community; when there's a big decision the board is making, the district cannot do that communication for the board. He said the community sees the board as the final voter; they're going to want to provide information to the board and to see what board members think and how they're communicating with district staff.

Director Rieck pointed out that the board is made up of seven individual members. Director Donohue said the board needs one voice and the question is how to get that one voice and effectively integrate with district staff to use board and staff time effectively and without redundancy. He said the plan implementation piece is designed to do this by having a standing board communication committee as an administrative organization. For a big issue coming up the committee would determine the stakeholders and how to get input, or it would have an ongoing event such as the Government Comment Corners that get rolled over every year. In those instances, the board would determine what it wants; the stakeholders the board wants to reach; how to reach them, and; how often to do so. Once those items were decided, the communication committee would be tasked with working with staff to determine what information is needed, what staff is already doing, etc. The communication committee would facilitate the communication plan to minimize the amount of time it'll take staff to do what the board wants as far as a communication plan, while ensuring that everything the board wants to get done gets done in the communication plan. The communication committee wouldn't be setting up a plan; it would implement something that the board decides to set up and would do it by working with both the district and the board.

Director Higgins said she supports the tool kit and doesn't see anything in the plan that is controversial. She said she is leaning toward a plan that's more about being visible and available, and she strongly supports having a communication subcommittee so there is a single contact point. She said she'd like to delegate writing articles to the subcommittee with board feedback but with the understanding that the subcommittee has the final say.

Vice Chair Keim added to Director Higgins comments by suggesting a process similar to the "pending agendas list" that is discussed at the weekly board agenda planning meetings, so that ideas are run through the planning committee before being sent to the communication committee.

Director Rodman said Director Higgins' comments were very organized and he'd only add that if the board published something in the newspaper, it should be under the chair's name; a piece of writing should have an author. He said it shouldn't necessarily be something that all board members agree with; it wouldn't be arguing positions, it would just be providing some clarifying information that might be helpful.

Chair Rieck expressed concern around utilizing the communication committee for conflict communication and the potential delay that could result before she is able to reply to constituents, especially when board members start having independent feelings on controversial issues. Ms. Holmes said that when controversy occurs, we need to be working together; she would be happy to write a one-page communication plan for key messages that can change quickly as needed.

Chair Rieck requested a specific process and steps that are clear so that everyone has the same understanding. She said process is being mixed with action and the procedural part needs to be outlined. She said she'd like to know what the process would be when the board decides to write an article. Director Donohue said the procedures already exist. He said the charge of the communication work group was to review the plan and bring back proposed changes and improvements; the work group doesn't know how these are going to work until it knows how the board will make them happen – e.g., by committee – and how the media are going to be constructed.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the board, Chair Rieck adjourned the meeting at 9:12 p.m.

Kari Rieck, Chair

Dawn Tarzian, Superintendent

Prepared by: Julie Catala

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