

MINUTES

Special Meeting of the

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
EQUITY COMMITTEE
Corvallis School District 509J
1555 SW 35th Street
Corvallis, OR 97339

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Cathi Alden
Cyrel Gable, Board Chair
Sara Gelser, Board Member
Heather Jager
Deb Kadas
Lynn Lahey
Nell O'Malley, Board Member
Laverne Pitts
Blake Rodman
Marc Rosegold
Anne Schuster
James Wickman

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Rae Delay

OTHERS PRESENT

Kathy Rodeman, Business Manager
Jeanne Holmes, Assistant to Superintendent
Kim Patten, Recorder

I. INTRODUCTION

Jeanne Holmes welcomed the committee and asked all members to read the committee's charge. She reminded committee members to keep focused on the charge.

Laverne Pitts, committee member and Corvallis Public School Foundation Director, distributed information to the committee showing the total donations to each school via the Corvallis Public School Foundation during the 2002-03 school year. She pointed out that the schools with the lowest SES levels have the highest amount of donations.

Jeanne Holmes shared information from Fred Wright regarding transportation changes. If the committee proposed adding transportation services to the current open enrollment policy, it would require significant changes to the current bell schedules. The good news from the state is that any transportation provided would be reimbursed 70%, as long as the student lives outside the walk boundary for the school they

attend. The bottom line is that it would be very costly to provide transportation for all students on open enrollment. Staff will work on providing cost ranges for different levels of service.

The committee shared their responses to the emails that were sent back and forth since the last meeting. The following comments were made:

- Choosing isn't an easy decision - you leave the convenience of your neighborhood school, could be labeled a traitor, you must provide your own transportation, and you could lose friendships.
- Parents who choose to transfer their students are not the vocal minority; they are actually a strong number.
- Our transfer policy leads to increased enrollment due to increased satisfaction.
- Schools with transfers in, don't necessarily have "all the goodies." For example, Franklin School (all transfers) has no:
 - Counselor - stage - transportation - choice of teachers
 - Cafeteria - band - orchestra - little district support
 - They only have four swings to be used by all students
- It seems as if teachers see enrollment as a detriment to the district.
- If open enrollment is in jeopardy, so is the district.
- Teachers and educators have a better understanding of the effect of our enrollment policy. But, we live in a consumers market so we need to keep the consumers interest in mind.
- We don't have enough information to look at changing the open enrollment policy.
- If we change the open enrollment policy, we could alienate people with an unpopular choice.
- Parents know what is best for their children. We shouldn't take a parent's right to choose what is right for their children.
- If we take away school of choice, we will only be moving backwards and we would lose more students to private schools.
- The tighter the budget situation gets, the harder the impact of school of choice is on the schools.
- Is anxiety from staff a result of the budget situation or is it a result of the open enrollment policy?
- The budget is the enemy, not the open enrollment policy.
- Staffing and scheduling is almost impossible due to the open enrollment window.
- We do not want to force kids to attend a school that they don't want to attend unless it is due to a safety or security issue.
- I don't think the data supports "death spiral of decline" or "weak programs" that were referred to in the emails.
- We should look at the deadlines for transfers.
- Appreciated honest emails that were sent.
- School of choice is not a new idea. Before our policy, people chose schools by buying real estate in that school's boundary. Our policy opened the option of choice to more families.
- If we look at the open enrollment window, we need to consider the unstable ESL populations who often move over the summer. When trying to run a Spanish immersion program, you need to make sure you have balanced numbers of English and Spanish speakers.
- We should work to equalize kindergarten and middle school levels.
- We should address neighborhood caps.
- Should we consider controls to avoid flight to the new Corvallis High School?
- If we address transportation, we also need to address transportation for after school activities.

- We need to explore exceptions for families of kids enrolled in magnet school programs so that families can attend the same school.

Jeanne Holmes discussed enrollment capacities. She suggested that the committee consider recommending a structured formula for setting enrollment capacities. At the elementary level, the formula needs to leave some flexibility for Title schools and magnet schools so that those schools can provide the additional services required by their school populations. The middle school enrollment could alleviate itself once the new middle school opens. There has been a suggestion that parents apply centrally for kindergarten transfers to address kindergarten issues. The following reactions were voiced:

- Many parents keep their kindergarten students in private schools and then transfer to public schools in first grade. More public relations could avoid the misconceptions that cause parents to choose private schools.
- I like central enrollment for kindergarten.
- Maybe we should explore the option of schools within schools to allow more choices for parents.
- There appears to be competition between schools because it seems to be a “personality” issue, not a substantive issue.
- Most reasons for transfers are not about programs, rather other factors.
- If parents apply centrally for kindergarten transfers, we should have them pick their first and second choices. If they change their minds, they would revert to their neighborhood school.
- We don’t need more choice, just solid programs at every school.
- K-8 programs need to be addressed in enrollment caps.
- Each elementary school staff spends countless hours identifying what makes their school unique. We need a way of getting that information to parents.

II. OPEN ENROLLMENT

The committee discussed current and future trends locally and nationally. (See Attachment A)

The committee discussed possible criteria for their recommendations. (See Attachment B)

Jeanne Holmes led discussions about possible recommendations. (See Attachment C) She then instructed the committee to review all three attachments for further discussions at our next meeting.

The process the committee will follow will be to firm up recommendations that will be sent to Superintendent Jim Ford. He will then review the recommendations, accept parts or all of the recommendations and then he will make a recommendation to the board.

III. BOUNDARY DATA

Kathy Rodeman presented boundary and transfer data provided by Alsea Geospatial. She pointed out that the data only includes students registered and enrolled in Corvallis School District. Based on the information, Kathy recommends not making major changes to the boundaries. Jeanne Holmes recommended that Kathy Rodeman and a small sub-committee (including principals) work on boundaries and make a recommendation back to the equity committee. The committee agreed. The committee was instructed to send any boundary input to Kathy Rodeman directly.

Attachment A

Current & Future Trends

Nationally:

1. Information access to all parents
2. Consider transportation
3. Choice is national trend, although it takes different forms (charter schools, choice schools – like Franklin without boundaries, transfer between districts)
4. No definitive data that it is beneficial to students, although increased parent satisfaction may bring indirect benefit

Locally:

1. Our community has well-educated, extremely concerned parents who care about the quality of public schools and have means and knowledge to home school and / or private school.
2. Degree of commitment to public school demonstrated by Franklin and charter school effort.
3. Growing number of students living in poverty.
4. Growing class sizes.
5. Parents are more concerned about their child “falling through the cracks”
6. Growing sense of needing to advocated for your child
7. Less funding
8. Growing concern of getting into the right college.

Attachment B

Possible Criteria

1. Helps assure that every student has equal opportunity to meet ~~district and state performance standards.~~ (output definition)
 - High quality opportunities
 - Financial language
 - Every student has access to high quality public school
 - Original definition
2. Alignment with district plan
 - Learning for all
 - Collaborative, creative culture
 - Aligned systems
3. Community support
4. Cost effective
 - Easy to administer

Attachment C

Possible Recommendations

1. Narrow open enrollment window
 - Explore exceptions for ESL, magnet programs, & dual emersion
2. Equalizing kindergarten and middle school offerings
3. Room for people to move in
4. Explore transportation
5. Keep siblings together
 - Would like more data on this issue
6. A lot of info to parents
7. Central kindergarten enrollment
8. Work toward voluntary diversification of choice