

MINUTES

Special Meeting of the

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
EQUITY COMMITTEE**  
Corvallis School District 509J  
1555 SW 35<sup>th</sup> Street  
Corvallis, OR 97339

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Rae Delay  
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

Cathi Alden

OTHERS PRESENT

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

I. INTRODUCTION

Jeanne Holmes welcomed the committee and introduced our new committee member, Heather Jager. Heather has been added to the committee as a result of last week's discussions, and she has been selected to represent 509J staff. Jeanne also reviewed the best hopes and worst fears that were listed by each committee member at the end of the last meeting. (See Attachment A)

## II. FOLLOW-UPS FROM LAST MEETING

Lynn Lahey presented information to the committee about the definition of equity as it relates to Civil Rights Legislation. Based on the handouts, the committee listed the following concerns about our definition of equity:

- Who determines high standard?
- We should add something to address “meeting diverse needs of students,”; “participate in all aspects of education process – facility, resources & programs”
- What does our definition give access to? Maybe it should read “equal opportunity to access”

Concerns were raised about the global “problem.” Jeanne Holmes reminded the committee of the issues raised by the district’s Leadership Team. The committee was developed based on concerns principals had that the current policies and practices skewed enrollment, making it hard to provide services at all schools. Specifically, increased transfers from Westland to Cheldelin, Crescent Valley to Corvallis High, and from Lincoln.

The committee discussed whether or not the inequity is actually due to the policy or if it is due to outside forces. The following factors were discussed:

- Parents make choices due to real estate options, daycare, work location, etc. It isn’t necessarily about “better or worse” schools.
- Marketing schools – should we? How? Who?
- Neighborhoods grow up which leaves elementary schools with lower enrollment.
- The concern was expressed that the financial crisis of the district creates real threats at each site as they lose students to other schools.
- Building enrollment capacity – should we hold space for students who move into the neighborhood boundary mid-year?

## III. OPEN ENROLLMENT

A brief summary of what other school districts in Oregon are doing was distributed and reviewed with the committee.

The committee did a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis of our open enrollment policy. (See Attachment B)

IV. NEXT STEPS

Jeanne asked the committee to reflect on the SWOT analysis and ask themselves whether or not the data supports it.

Attested to by:

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Cyrel Gable, Board Chair

Prepared by: Kim Patten

## Attachment A

# Best Hopes & Worst Fears – November 20, 2003 Meeting

### Best Hopes

- Level out SES diversity
- Change the transfer timelines so that district knows where kids will be earlier than August
- Find effective ways to expand access to CHOICE for all families (perhaps transportation, better communication)
- We will revise the policies to prevent large population shifts
- Fair recommendations that don't single out schools – consensus
- We will strengthen school choice and make it as accessible and equitable as possible
- We talk about how things can work with choice
- We can devise a strategy that improves equity district-wide with the least amount of engineering
- Refine our system to provide better access to quality education that matches student / family needs
- Move SES diverse schools
- The Board will make a decision that will give those of us in the trenches a clear path to work with – right now things are always muddy. Put serious controls (or eliminate) the free choice we have now. It has been one of the most damaging policy decisions we have had to struggle with as a district in recent history. All schools need to be healthy and that is what is in the best interest of kids.

### Fears

- Our decision / recommendation may anger some people
- End open enrollment
- Take away the security of permanent transfers
- Nothing will happen because of a small group of vocal individuals who oppose change
- Make situation worse, not better
- Make families and teachers angry
- Policies will be altered to suit bureaucratic / administrative convenience and become less workable and welcoming for families
- We will end choice in an effort to be fair
- We come up with workable solutions that make everyone unhappy
- We develop a rigid bureaucratic model that makes innovative change more difficult
- Exacerbate class system
- No one has the courage to make what will probably be a difficult and controversial decision. The committee has been created to “rubber stamp” a pre-determined position.

Feedback

- The discussion needs to be more focused on equity not differences
- I don't think we have enough data to see if "choice" is actually creating inequities, or if there are other reasons. We would need enrollment data, FRL data, IEP data, etc. pre-choice in order to prove that choice has created inequities.
- I appreciate the research you have done – great insights!
- Helpful to have common feedback and info to begin – the data is very helpful
- I am still unclear about where we're going

What would be helpful?

A better understanding of the problems we are trying to address – name the concerns with the current system.

## Attachment B

# Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats Analysis

## Strengths

- Gives families choices
- Allows students with issues at current school to move without stigma
- Keeps families in district
- Empowers parents
- Works with choice culture
- Continuity – transfer is in effect until child leaves that grade level – elementary, middle, or high school
- Flexibility for building administrator to make decisions around class size
- Long time to choose
- Allows for individual needs of students
- Could/should encourage school / community focus
- Could/should give schools incentives to be unique
- Could cultivate an individual culture
- Promotes parent satisfaction
- More supportive parents for teachers & principals
- Overt choice instead covert
- Provides stability for children when families move or family configurations change
- Allows option of family attending same school – siblings have priority in transfer process
- Right not to choose
- Creates sense of competitiveness between staffs

## Weaknesses

- Creates sense of competitiveness between staffs – doesn't feel good
- Competitiveness without opportunity/training to develop – not differentiated
- Too long window for transfers
- Not enough info on uniqueness of schools readily available
- Fracturing sense of neighborhood
- Allows moves for any reason - not educational
- Doesn't allow enough incentive to stay where you are
- Choice not for all – resources, time, cognitive, transportation
- Doesn't necessarily promote diversity
- School jumping
- Transfer & lottery may not have had oversight – FR's/FRL/ESL/IEP ranges
- Parents can hold school hostage
- Hard to plan when budget evolves around # of students - instability

- Doesn't address neighborhood enrollment – when families move in after transfers have been accepted
- Including siblings first – not fair to other families
- Increase in level of poverty (don't know this for sure) at some schools – harder to meet needs
- Doesn't include transportation
- Confusing deadlines
- Class size wiggle room may increase class sizes
- At kindergarten – surprised at how happy they are at school they end up in
- Focus high needs program in one school creates problems
- People agonize that they have to choose

## **Opportunity**

- Successful programs
- Magnet school opportunities in other schools
- Look at balancing high needs programs among several schools
- Look at boundary areas
- Boundaryless district
- Each school to differentiate itself – schools with highest morale have strongest vision/focus
- Add transportation
- Lottery related to floor
- Different between each level? Athletics?
- Blending of CV/CHS – make what's available the same at both schools
- Make all schools attractive to families
- Change how we present choices – present as district
- Way to reduce competition
- Two new buildings – that will draw people
- Adjust way kindergarten program is done – straight half day kindergarten – consider siblings – three choices – district lottery
- Printed publication – same format program – send home to all children, two languages & consistent open house date – standardization of presentation
- Change open enrollment window
- Not marketing but info for families
- Review visitation procedures
- Standardizing would make district more cohesive
- More K-8's?
- Find out what parents want – get parents to answer – what are we doing well? What not?

## **Threats**

- New schools
- Marketing takes our time and resources
- Visiting classrooms - a security issue
- We duplicate programs like core knowledge and then find out that is not really what people are after
- Misinterpreting what is successful – or doesn't fit school's culture