

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
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

OTHERS PRESENT

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

I. INTRODUCTION

Jeanne Holmes welcomed the committee, and then reviewed the agenda and the progress the committee made at the last meeting.

II. BOUNDARY SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

The boundary sub-committee has met three times to discuss boundary concerns. Kathy Rodeman reviewed their findings with the committee including criteria, boundary concerns, and recommendations. (See Attachment A.) Kathy told the committee that it is a healthy and natural process for school districts to consider boundary changes every 3-5 years. The recommendation from the sub-committee is that these items be forwarded to staff for further consideration next fall. The committee voted in favor of forwarding the boundary sub-committee's recommendation to Superintendent Ford.

III. OPEN ENROLLMENT

Kim Patten reminded the committee of the transportation information they received at the December 18, 2003 meeting. The committee then completed a pros / cons analysis of their possible recommendation to “explore transportation options for students on open enrollment.” (See Attachment B.) When the committee considered whether or not this recommendation met the criteria, they agreed that it did not meet three of the four criteria, and were unable to commit either way on the fourth criteria - community support. The committee was unable to come to a decision about whether or not providing transportation would meet the needs of enough families to justify the cost, and whether or not any cost would be justified in this time of dwindling resources. This discussion will continue at the next meeting.

The committee then completed a pros / cons analysis of their possible recommendation for “voluntary diversification.” (See Attachment C.) The committee discussed what exactly “voluntary diversification” meant. The general consensus was that we intended for each school to work on their unique “signature,” or program identity. The committee as a whole was unable to decide whether or not this was a new task for our schools or if we need to do a better job of communicating what has already been developed.

Jeanne Holmes emailed the committee a new revision of our problem statement before the meeting. (See Attachment D.) The committee gave Jeanne a few recommendations for minor changes, but agreed that it was very close to being finalized. Jeanne will make the final revisions for approval at our next meeting.

IV. NEXT STEPS

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 18, 2004 at 2:00 PM at the District Office Board Room.

ATTACHMENT A

BOUNDARY COMMITTEE UPDATE

Criteria for Boundary Decisions

1. Least disruption, trying to protect kids who moved most recently.
2. Kids attend school within a reasonable distance of home.
3. Consider socio-economic status balance – at least don't make it worse.
4. Natural progression through all levels (elementary, middle school, and high school).
5. Safety issues – natural neighborhood boundaries.

Where are the Boundary Concerns?

Elementary

Jefferson – Only 218 kids live in the boundary area – 69 are on transfers to other schools.

Wilson – Only 346 kids live in the boundary area – 151 are on transfer to other schools.

Inavale – Only 57 kids live in the boundary area – 15 are on transfer to other schools.

Which schools have too many kids?

Garfield

Adams

Mountain View

Possibilities for moving students:

Current School	Number of Students	Area / Program	Possible New School
Garfield	28	Developmentally Disabled Program	Jefferson or Wilson
Garfield	23	Old Harding Boundary	Jefferson
Garfield	19	Peoria Road	Jefferson
Mt. View	21	Jack London	Wilson or Garfield *
Mt. View	7	Conifer	Wilson or Garfield *
Mt. View	1	Lancaster	Wilson or Garfield*
Adams	?	Oak Creek	Jefferson?

*If moved to Garfield, then we would propose moving a group of students from the Garfield boundary area downtown to Jefferson.

ATTACHMENT A (continued)

Middle School

Current Enrollment:

Cheldelin 752
Westland 565

Number of students living in boundary areas:

Cheldelin 754
Westland 554 (*need to check this number*)

Problem:

- Students living close to the new middle school are currently in the Cheldelin boundary.
- K-8 programs are geographically located in the Westland boundary and therefore draw more Westland students.

Possible Change - Move boundary from Circle to Walnut:

- 113 students
- Good SES mix
- Need to consider impact on CV

Unintended Consequence:

- Possible negative impact on CV enrollment
- # of Students living in boundary area
CV 1330
CHS 1078
- Current high school enrollment
CV 1106
CHS 1375

ATTACHMENT A (continued)

Boundary Recommendations

- Boundary decision needs to be strategic, not just a matter of moving kids from one boundary to another. Consider in context of other factors:
 - Long-range facilities plan
 - Placement of special programs
 - Garfield magnet program
 - Another possible school closure
- Boundary changes need careful study and ample time for input.
- With what we know today, we would recommend that the district consider the above changes.
- Recommend the district pursue this conversation in the fall of 2004.
 - The committee recommends that this should be a high priority for staff.
 - The committee recommends that the process commence by 10/15/04 and decisions be made by the end of January 2005 so that changes could be implemented in 2005/06.
- Consider the Developmentally Delayed (DD) program move in the context of boundary changes – need long-term placement for DD program.
- Concern about special program overload if we move the high school DD program to Corvallis High School. It also would impact negatively the enrollment at Crescent Valley High School.

ATTACHMENT B

Recommendation Analysis

Recommendation: Explore transportation options for students on open enrollment.

Does it meet criteria?

- The committee agreed that it did not meet three of the four criteria.
- The criteria that they did not agree on was whether or not the community would support us providing transportation.

Possible Variations:

- Create pods based on trends
- Hub transportation system

Unintended Consequences:

Additional information needed:

- What is the break point on cost?

Comments to Consider:

- 26% of students on open enrollment
- Is this a high cost for a few isolated cases?

<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improves equity by providing greater access• Could reduce stratification	<p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential cost• Scheduling changes required• Would it create more problems than it would fix
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ATTACHMENT C

Recommendation Analysis

Recommendation: Voluntary diversification

Does it meet criteria?

Possible Variations:

Unintended Consequences:

Additional information needed:

- Jeanne Holmes will email the current school signatures to the committee for review.

Comments to Consider:

- Identify and articulate each school's strengths
- Each school coming up with identity raises moral; staff takes ownership
- Works best when it evolves from within the school
- Schools have already developed their signatures
- This is not for SES diversification, but to create more educational choices
- The task is easier at the elementary level

<p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Morale raising• Good for schools to take stock• Could provide quality programs in special areas / with our budget situation, we can't provide full programs in all areas• Provides identity for parents to better understand offerings	<p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff perceive as one more thing in stressed out time• Focus on signature to point of losing basic programs, which should be at all schools• Grabbing at something just to have identity• Adds to competitiveness between schools
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ATTACHMENT D

Problem Statement: Open Enrollment Policies and Practices

School choice is a national trend. It takes different forms in other communities and states—charter schools, schools without boundaries like Franklin, magnet programs like the dual-language program at Garfield, and even inter-district options. In our community, school choice takes the form of open enrollment among district schools.

School choice meets a variety of school and family needs. It allows families to find the best fit in terms of academics, values and lifestyle. Free choice and self-determination are highly valued in American culture and in Corvallis. The opportunity for open enrollment has remained popular with a significant number of families and appears to enhance satisfaction with district services. Satisfaction is important because we believe public education supports democratic ideals and the goal of a commonly educated citizenry. Satisfaction also effects enrollment and taxpayer support, both of which impact the district's financial resources.

However, some in the Corvallis School District believe school choice has created inequities between schools and unequal educational opportunities for students. National research points to a number of possible reasons for this, including factors related to the availability of transportation and information. As in other communities across the country, all families in Corvallis currently do not have equal access to information and transportation, which impairs their ability to take advantage of the open enrollment option.

In addition, data indicate that some Corvallis schools have become increasingly stratified in terms of socio-economics over the past ten years. This stratification appears to be caused by multiple factors--increasing poverty in our community, declining enrollment, magnet programs, school closures and consolidations and open enrollment.

Another area of concern not related to socio-economic stratification is declining enrollment at a few schools. Factors contributing to this include open enrollment, a declining school-age population in the school boundary area and parent dissatisfaction about various aspects of a school.

The crux of the issue is determining if students at schools with socio-economic stratification and/or declining enrollment are negatively impacted by these trends. Any school losing more students than it attracts suffers a loss of funding, which can—and in some schools does—have an adverse impact on the educational program. When school budgets have been cut year after year, every dollar is critical, and any further loss of funding is particularly difficult. While all of our schools have strong staffs and good programs, educational offerings suffer when enrollment declines and dollars are lost. Compounding this problem, schools are put in the position of competing for students, which can draw time and financial resources away from their educational mission.

Our schools with larger low socio-economic populations face additional challenges. Students tend to come to school lacking the background experiences of middle class students, creating a different and more difficult teaching challenge than at higher socio-economic status (SES) schools.

None-the-less, the quality of instruction at such Corvallis schools is held to the same high standard as other schools in the district. Corvallis places highly skilled teachers in all schools, regardless of their demographics. Additional resources are channeled to these schools through Title I, the district funding formula and, in some cases, other federal and state compensatory grants. These resources provide additional support to meet the unique needs of students and families in our lower SES schools.

In conclusion, the committee believes that the issue of open enrollment and its possible negative impact on equity has surfaced at this time largely because of the significant reduction in state funding over the last decade. Each year, schools have to get by on less and anything that might exacerbate that is perceived as a problem.

Declining enrollment has had a negative impact on some Corvallis schools because a loss of students has resulted in additional loss of money. Open enrollment is a contributing factor to this decline at some schools. At several schools, it has contributed to an increase in socio-economic stratification, at both ends of the spectrum. Some families lack the resources—specifically transportation and information--to choose and attend schools outside their zoned neighborhoods. In effect, they do not have the same access to open enrollment that other families are afforded.

Since open enrollment is valued by many families in Corvallis, the district should not abandon it. To do so, would cause great disruption and dissatisfaction. The challenge, then, is finding a way within the context of open enrollment to diminish barriers that currently stand in the way of equal access and to reduce as much as possible the negative impact of declining enrollment. At the same time, individual schools with declining enrollment may need to look at what internal factors are causing parents to opt for other schools.