

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
Deb Kadas
Lynn Lahey
Laverne Pitts
Blake Rodman
Marc Rosegold
Anne Schuster
James Wickman

OTHERS PRESENT

Jeanne Holmes, Assistant to Superintendent
Kim Patten, Recorder
Fred Wright, Director of Auxiliary Services
Brian Maxwell, Laidlaw Transit, Inc.

I. INTRODUCTION

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

Jeanne distributed the final draft of the problem statement and asked the committee for input. Mark Rosegold stated for the record that he had a proposed rewrite for the last paragraph as follows:

While open enrollment is valued by many families in Corvallis, the district should consider curtailing the process until funding levels allow for an increased level of transportation. Families who lack the ability to transport their children to the school of their choice are disadvantaged within the current system. It also is clear that increased levels of transportation are not fiscally responsible at a time when cuts to basic services are a reality. It would be prudent for the district to limit or eliminate any program / policy that may cause inequities of access. Constraints to open enrollment also would help alleviate the problems associated with declining enrollment at certain schools and would lessen the need for schools to “market” against each other.

The committee discussed Mark's input, but the majority of the committee agreed to the version that was distributed without changes. The committee agreed to include this rewritten last paragraph in the final report as a minority report.

II. OPEN ENROLLMENT

Fred Wright and Brian Maxwell answered questions regarding the transportation options that were sent to the committee via email. (See Attachment A.) Fred pointed out that the cost estimates do not include extra supervision time at each school. He explained that in order to complete any of the options, we would have students at every school at least 30 minutes earlier than they currently arrive at school to accommodate transport time to other schools.

The committee reviewed their pros vs. cons analysis for the recommendation to explore transportation options for students on open enrollment. (See Attachment B.) The committee agreed to send the following recommendation to Superintendent Ford: The committee recognizes that lack of public to Crescent Valley High School creates an inequity and recommends that the district consider working with Crescent Valley High School to provide transportation to the Boys & Girls Club before and after school, and at 5:30 PM to accommodate after school activities.

The committee reviewed their pros vs. cons analysis for the recommendation to encourage voluntary diversification. (See Attachment C.) Jeanne Holmes shared that the district's Leadership Team had discussed this recommendation. Staff on the Leadership Team was not excited about forcing this issue. They felt that the schools have already developed signatures and identities and that forcing diversification of educational programs could prove to be unsuccessful. The committee agreed to the following recommendation: The committee recommends that the district should continue to encourage and support voluntary diversity and explore new ways to be supportive, while ensuring a comprehensive programs at every school.

The committee reviewed the summary of recommendations. (See Attachment D) They discussed the recommendation to narrow the transfer window and agreed to recommend that staff determine the actual dates for the new enrollment window.

III. NEXT STEPS

Cyrel Gable proposed that we recommend adding a process for triggering a review of the open enrollment policy. For example, if enrollment rises or falls by 10% for 2-3 consecutive years, then a review team consisting of people internal to and outside the school, shall study the internal and external causes for this change and make recommendations if necessary. The committee discussed the recommendation and agreed to the proposal. Jeanne will include it in the final report.

The committee will present a final report to the Superintendent. Jeanne Holmes asked for two committee members to work with her to write the committee's final report. Blake Rodman and James Wickman volunteered to assist in the process. The report will be presented to the board at the April 19, 2004 work session. Rae Delay and Laverne Pitts agreed to represent the committee at that meeting.

ATTACHMENT A

TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION

SUBMITTED TO EQUITY COMMITTEE ON MARCH 15, 2004 VIA EMAIL

Dear Equity Committee Members,

Last week I met with Jeanne Holmes, Kim Patten, and Brian Maxwell to discuss transportation options related to the open enrollment policy. Jeanne and Kim briefed me on discussions that have taken place thus far in your group, and we tried costing out some of the options that came up as suggestions in your last meeting. I wanted to share this information with you in preparation for your next meeting.

Please understand that these are only estimates. Until we know exactly how many students would be involved, and where they live, we could not state an accurate figure. In some cases, we may have to add an additional bus, which could further increase the costs.

The Hub Option:

In this plan, students would be picked up at their home school and delivered from there to other schools in the district. Students could walk or ride their regular bus to their home school. My best estimate is that this could cost the district as much as \$180,000 a year for elementary school transportation. In addition, schools would have to pay for supervision of students before school, since, to make this plan work, some students would have to be delivered to school well before the official start time.

Transportation for middle and high school would be an additional \$3200. This is much less expensive since it is only between two sites. (The K-8 school costs are included in the elementary costs, since they would be on the elementary routes.)

The Cluster Schools Option:

In this plan, we would provide transportation between three schools at the elementary level. Logical clusters might be Adams, Inavale and Lincoln; Jefferson, Hoover and Wilson; and Garfield, Franklin and Mt. View. My best estimate is that this would cost about \$18,600 per cluster, for a total of about \$55,800.

Additional costs for the middle and high schools would be the same as in the Hub Option—about \$3200.

In addition to these two plans, we considered totally revamping our bus routes, making fewer pick-up and drop-off spots in neighborhoods, but dropping kids at more schools. Brian felt that elementary parents would not be happy with these changes. Parents like the bus stops to be as close to their homes as possible, especially for younger children.

We also discussed the possibility of just providing transportation from the largest low socio-economic areas. We didn't pursue an estimate on this, because we agreed that this could cause a drain specifically from our lower socio-economic schools, and has the potential to create other kinds of equity issues.

Yet another possibility is to have students ride the city transit system. I understand that currently about four middle school students ride to Franklin from South Corvallis. This isn't a great solution, but does provide an option for some. Unfortunately, not all schools are on the bus route, and the bus schedules

don't necessarily jive with school schedules. Also, Brain stressed that city transit privileges can be suspended at any time, even mid-route, if there is inappropriate behavior.

One of the problems with providing transportation for open enrollment is that, if you offer it to some, you have to offer it to all. If we decided to do this, we would have to reorganize our bus routes, which would require notice to Laidlaw in early August about which students would need rides and from where to where. This would increase the already heavy work load for district staff, and as Brian described it, would be an "organizational nightmare" from his end.

Brian also shared that the Monmouth-Independence School District used to provide transportation for open enrollment anywhere in their district, but had to stop because of the high cost and complexity. I will have Kim call them to get more information about what happened.

I understand the dilemma about providing equal access for all families to open enrollment. However, at this time, I certainly do not have any extra money in my budget to pay for additional transportation. In fact, the superintendent has directed us to keep cuts away from schools for next year, so I most likely will be making additional cuts in my budget this spring.

I hope this information is helpful to you. As you can see, I have major concerns about the costs and inefficiencies of this proposal in these economic times.

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 providing transportation.

Possible Variations:

- Create pods based on transfer 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

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

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS (as of beginning of March 18, 2004 meeting)

1. Provide information to all parents about open enrollment options.
 - Centrally produced and objective information
2. Set realistic building capacities and enforce them.
 - Take into consideration special programs and kids moving into neighborhood
3. Boundary recommendation.
4. Narrow window for open enrollment to reduce negative impact on budgeting and staffing .
 - Administrative staff should determine actual dates
 - Will allow schools to offer the programs they advertise in the spring
 - Consider needs of families and levels
 - Consider special programs
5. The committee recognizes that lack of public to Crescent Valley High School creates an inequity and recommends that the district consider working with Crescent Valley High School to provide transportation to the Boys & Girls Club before and after school, and at 5:30 PM to accommodate after school activities.
6. The committee recommends that the district should continue to encourage and support voluntary diversity and explore new ways to be supportive, while ensuring a comprehensive programs at every school.

Comments:

While not part of charge, the committee wished to express concern about impact of enrollment on school funding. The district might consider widening 1.5% funding cushion to reduce impact of open enrollment on school budgets / programs in September.

Items Moved to Staff:

- Moving DD program out of Garfield
- Balancing Franklin Socio Economic Status
- Centralized kindergarten enrollment