

WORK SESSION MINUTES

11/ A Regular Meeting of the Lane County School District No. 19 Board of Education was held on January 28, 2019.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Board Chair Zach Bessett called the Springfield Board of Education meeting to order in the Board Room of the District Administration Building at 4:01 pm.

Attendance

Board members present included Board Chair Zach Bessett, Board Vice Chair Michelle Webber, Laurie Adams, Dr. Emilio Hernandez and Naomi Raven.

District staff and community members identified included Superintendent Bruce Smolnisky, David Collins, Judy Bowden, Jenna McCulley, Whitney McKinley, Suzy Price, Brian Megert, Jeff Michna, Brett Yancey, Dustin Reese, David Willis, John DeWenter, Laura Weiss, Terry Beyer, Brenda Hansen, Judy Leahy, Jonathan Light, Anne Goff, Kari Isham and Marina Brassfield.

2. CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Dr. Hernandez asked to discuss at the end of the meeting Board attendance at the Blacks in Government Dinner on February 1st and the NAACP Freedom Fund Dinner on February 15th.

3. GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Superintendent Bruce Smolnisky and Assistance Superintendent David Collins shared reports on district goals and strategies.

Mr. Smolnisky made connections for the board, regarding what the district believed, what it planned to accomplish, and what it currently did. State report card results were also shared.

Mr. Smolnisky shared the most important thing was the district's vision and values. Its vision statement was, *"Every student a graduate, prepared for a bright and successful future."* The district's mission was *"Every student every day."* Both statements drove the district's planning processes.

Mr. Smolnisky acknowledged there were current achievement gaps, so strategies were being implemented to eliminate inequities in achievement, foster a safe, healthy and engaging environment and promote an inclusive culture and environment.

Mr. Smolnisky said the Board goals were:

- Promote growth and success for every student
- Support families so that every student is prepared to learn
- Provide personalized learning opportunities for every student
- Create safe and future ready facilities that inspire learning
- Advocate for funding and policies that support education.

Mr. Smolnisky explained how the district translated goals and visions into implementation strategies. Over the past three years, there was an intentional focus on specific high leverage practices that impacted student

achievement. Doing so included some tough decisions, but the district was ultimately moving the dial for students. He reiterated the district and board focused on strategies that used limited resources to reach identified goals in the most efficient and effective ways.

- **STATE REPORT CARD**

Assistant Superintendent David Collins shared a PowerPoint presentation, entitled, “*State Report Card.*” His report provided an overview of priorities on graduation rates and summarized performance indicators by grade.

Mr. Collins shared an infographic on district initiatives and graduation rates over time. Each year showed constants, as well as different priorities and actions. Constants were known as Key Performance Indicators (KPI).

Mr. Collins briefly discussed some of the successes in 2006, which were mostly around the way the district worked systematically and collaboratively, and not in separate silos. Some were around specific innovations, such as expanded delivery models which assessed the Gateways High School alternative options and Springfield High School’s promising practices program. The district also focused on workforce readiness. Another initiative with the State’s support was a K-5 literacy task force.

In 2008, the district explored Response to Intervention (RTI), a tiered approach to practices for educational, social and behavioral areas, instructional technology, and a bond measure for Thurston and Maple Elementary schools. Finally, the District began to assess recession impacts. Mr. Collins noted that at that time, SPS had a graduation rate of only 56.7%.

Mr. Collins continued that in 2011, the district had priorities around “Arts Matter” which looked at how and what fiscal priorities were for programs in the arts. Ultimately, the district needed to continue high school offerings as best they could to mitigate impacts. Another identified commitment was to arts across the system, including arts, pathways, and music programs.

Additionally, in 2011 Mr. Collin explained the district looked at middle school schedules to maximize student seat time. Administration began conversations around quality instructional strategies, research of best practices and community partnerships. Much of the focus was to connect to grant funds and initiatives. In 2011, the graduation rate was 61.5%.

In 2014, SPS continued efforts on quality instruction and had a task force related to full day kindergarten. Through Teach Oregon and other grants, the district had priorities in the area of teacher growth pathways related to classwork. The district began exploration of the 2014 bond measure.

Mr. Collins highlighted the year 2015. Improvements were seen for graduation rates at 63.5%.

Mr. Collins transitioned his focus to the last couple years. The district looked to take siloed and fractured work and integrate it purposefully into district-wide strategic plans. The recession caused the district to start taking steps to understand how all efforts connected and how the school board vision connected to the reality of each building. Due to intentional investments in key areas of promising practices and integrating those into a systemic approach, the district saw a 9% increase in graduation rates.

Dr. Hernandez asked what led the district to incorporate changes between 2015 and present. Mr. Collins responded likely leadership changes and a collective desire to come together. Prior, there wasn’t a foundational stability. The district began investing in folks who could move the work forward.

In response to a comment from Dr. Hernandez, Mr. Collins said the district experienced multiple changes -- not only in board membership, but in district leadership, building leadership, and in teaching leadership. Any one of those wouldn't have made a huge difference. Now, there was a solid foundation and a lot of people currently existed who would be here next year.

Dr. Hernandez wanted to ensure progression continued. Mr. Collins reiterated if there was a solid foundation, it was easy to make small incremental changes.

Mr. Collins summarized the K-12 indicators. The district looked at:

- Kindergarten readiness;
- K-12 regular attender data;
- Early literacy skills;
- K-12 PBIS;
- Academic success of 3rd to 8th grades in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science (opt out numbers could influence the rate);
- 9th to 12th grade on track data;
- Credit deficiencies in high school;
- Graduation rates (four year and five-year completer rates).

Dr. Hernandez was unsure if the district should spend time worrying about parent choice, i.e. opt out, but he wondered how the board and staff could assist in greater understanding of the process. He didn't want to paint it as a negative.

Mr. Collins said tests were designed to provide systemic data. As an educator, he wanted to know all kinds of indicators for student success. He appreciated conversations about broadening indicators. As a system, they are constantly looking at how to provide access for more students, while supporting parental rights and the needs of kids.

Ms. Raven said that it is important to reach out to families to make a connection and build an expectation for the child's education. She would love more conversation around specific methods the district used to reach early education levels.

Mr. Collins referred to the "2017-18 District Report Card Handouts," which included demographic data points and outcomes for indicators. Mr. Collins disaggregated 9th grade on track and correlated demographic data including race, ethnicity, and free and reduced lunch.

Dr. Hernandez asked for a definition of an "Ever English Learner." Mr. Collins said those were students who were current or former English language learners within the student population.

Dr. Hernandez noticed that some categories listed "not enough students." He wondered what a high enough number was for students. Mr. Collins explained each independent disaggregate had an end number and each was differentiated. Mr. Collins would send the information to board members.

Chair Bessett asked how long the district had tracked "on track to graduate" stats. He was told the district began tracking the data in 2014-15.

Mr. Collins introduced "9th Grade on Track to Graduate" data. Currently, 89% of students were on track for graduation. "On track" meant those students earning one quarter of their required credits towards graduation in their 9th grade year. It was a 10% increase from the previous year. The state average was 85%. The district

was currently outpacing the state's average, in that particular category. Mr. Collins added there were varying measures for each disaggregated student group.

Mr. Collins explained one effort employed was online instructional support systems, as well as expanded credit recovery options. The district conducted a review of the alternative education model and delivery structure, when looking for options for students who couldn't be served in traditional brick and mortar schools. There was an intentional refocus on data analytics to add tools for further engagement. The district was in year two of the effort and was excited for the work ahead.

Ms. Raven was impressed with the ELL and the Hispanic-Latino percentages. She wondered about the American Indian/Alaska Native students and those students in the 80th percentile. There was a significant difference. Ms. Raven would prefer less discrepancy. Mr. Collins explained the district looked at indicators in-time. Over the last three years, the district had an opportunity to work with the state in transformational work around ELL and other student populations. Mr. Collins added it was important to individualize education for all student populations.

Mr. Collins moved to on-time graduation from 2016-17. He contributed success to intentional supports at all levels. Additional credit recovery options looked at different students and how they navigated the system. Also, in 2016, the board explored CTE pathways and renewed its workforce readiness discussion. The State awarded districts High School Success Funds to help schools provide more educational options earlier in high school. Mr. Collins added that each indicator had a set of standards. The State implemented the report cards to meet the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements.

Mr. Collins shared a handout on 2017-18 graduation rate data. Over the past five years, there was more than a 9% increase in the graduation rate for the four-year cohort and a 4.6% increase in five-year completer rates. The district was generally moving at a faster pace compared to statewide rates.

Mr. Collins shared a graphic that showed the data sets over a three-year period for graduation rates for each school. He highlighted that all three district high schools increased their graduation rates, however there was a reduction for the charter school, Willamette Leadership Academy (WLA). The data set would be on next year's report card. In response to Ms. Raven, Mr. Collins explained the State was trying to streamline indicators.

Dr. Hernandez asked Mr. Collins to explain why WLA rates dropped. He was very concerned. Mr. Collins said there had been leadership changes, but the specific data sets were just released so staff was only beginning to explore the causes. Mr. Collins had engaged WLA administration to create a plan moving forward. Dr. Hernandez asked how many students were within the data set for WLA? Mr. Collins responded around 60 students. There were 300 students enrolled and 140 of them were high school students. Since it was a smaller population, changes often had significant impacts on percentages.

Ms. Raven asked about WLA enrollment trends. Mr. Collins said there were variances throughout the year, but overall there was a decline. Mr. Smolnisky added this was the time of year some students considered enrolling in WLA due to credit deficiencies.

Mr. Collins discussed first through third grade English Language Arts (ELA) results. The District was currently on par with the State average of 48%. He provided a break-down of disaggregated data which showed some discrepancies. While there was an increase, there was a lot of work to be done in some groups. Success was due in part to the District reinvestment in ELA by providing sufficient and renewed materials. Leadership also looked at a possible ELD supplemental material adoption. Finally, the district renewed its literacy team, which assessed data and looked forward to where the district needed to go.

Mr. Collins mentioned supports for full day kindergarten. The data set didn't reflect full day kindergarten, but the district saw positive impacts since its implementation, as students progressed from kinder to first and third grades.

Dr. Hernandez asked how TAG students were identified. Suzanne Price, Director of Elementary Education explained it was a combination of assessments that staff looked at. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and EasyCBM were two nationally normed assessments used. Ms. Price said staff also considered teacher and parent input, as well as work samples. Testing began in second grade. It was rigorous and held twice a year.

Ms. Price explained there was also a program called Potential to Perform, in which teachers looked at attributes and assets of students who might typically be overlooked. Dr. Hernandez wondered which grades participated in TAG? Ms. Price responded schools assessed students from second to fifth grade. Each school had TAG contacts, and those contacts worked with teachers to ensure every student had a Student Individual Plan (SIP). Finally, TAG students had access to monthly enrichment opportunities and a summer engineering program.

Dr. Hernandez wondered if there was a program where students went to UO. Ms. Price said it was a separate program at the secondary level. High school students didn't have a SIP because there was access to more courses to meet individual needs and goals.

Ms. Raven wondered what systems were in place to track students from the first full day kindergarten cohort? Mr. Collins would work with the Superintendent to prepare a future presentation.

Chair Bessett wondered if there were other tracking methods? Mr. Collins said last year, a District committee assessed how things were going. From the conversations, staff identified a need to create explicit instructions for students who were entering kindergarten. Through leadership efforts, the district was able to have the professional development prepared for the beginning of the 2018-19 school year and provide staff training within the first few weeks of the school year.

Ms. Raven was interested in more qualitative data, such as teacher feedback. Mr. Collins responded they would have that data.

Mr. Collins shared data sets on individual student progress. Some were insufficient. As he gathered more information, he would share it with the Board. There had been recent material adoptions, including math curriculums for K-8 math adoption, and specifically 6th-8th grades. Schools were currently in their second year of having those materials in use. Professional development was aligned to the curriculum and teachers had other additional supports.

Chair Bessett asked how the data was collected? Mr. Collins replied through State assessments. The data was based on student participation in Oaks and Smarter Balance tests.

Mr. Collins introduced 8th grade mathematics. The District had a 30% measure for students who met or exceeded; the State average was 41%. There was an increase, but math had been a problem area for over a decade. Now, the district had an advisory team for curriculum adoption, to ensure there was core material and instructional strategies for teachers. Ms. Raven asked if Mr. Collins referenced the newly adopted math curriculum? Mr. Collins said yes, it wasn't an easy shift, but it was a critical one. Dr. Hernandez thought there needed to be more State support to change the trends. Mr. Collins agreed.

Mr. Collins shared that the district focused heavily on attendance. While the state collected data on K-2nd grade regular attenders, the District focused on regular attenders throughout K-12th grade. Students who

attended more than 90% of their school days were more likely to graduate. SPS was at 84%, just slightly over the State's average.

Mr. Collins noted that chronic absenteeism could be due to a variety of reasons (i.e. lack of mental health services, lack of food or other resources, homelessness, etc.). The District was employing strategies to encourage attendance. He invited Laura Weiss to explain her work with families and the Brattain House.

Ms. Weiss explained in previous years, the organization asked families to come to the Brattain House for services, meaning there was a lot of back and forth for students between the home, school, and Brattain House. With the Brattain House's restructuring, there would be four family liaisons, cross trained to provide services at school buildings. Additionally, each liaison would have specialty areas.

Mr. Collins added that the District worked to expand its partnerships with mental health providers to provide connections for families navigating crises. Other investments included truancy officers, who were trained to be less punitive and to focus more on building connections between the family and the school.

Dr. Hernandez asked about the students with disabilities categories. He wondered about the percentage of students on Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) and 504 plans that were moving through the system?

Mr. Collins clarified that Dr. Hernandez wanted a historical timeline. Mr. Collins said they were seeing some improvement in graduation rates for this particular population. He added the District constantly sought to provide support and services for those families.

Dr. Hernandez had concerns about success rates and whether IEP/504 plans were being written accurately. He wondered if the process was working for families. He thought accuracy would help move kids through the system and wanted teachers to be mindful when referring students to particular supports. Mr. Collins said yes and acknowledged IEP/504 covered a wide range of needs.

Dr. Hernandez wondered how the District used free and reduced lunch data? Mr. Collins said fiscally, Title I schools were affected most. The District had adjusted the program to look at an individual school's needs.

Ms. Adams addressed Dr. Ricker, and said she appreciated his work.

Chair Bessett wanted to analyze what was being done for Social-Emotional (SE) learning. There were increased problem behaviors with kids acting out. He wondered how the District addressed the problem and hoped to learn more at a future meeting.

Mr. Smolnisky hoped the Board saw connections between the District's values, visions, actions, and results. He added that he was proud of the work that people are doing, but there is still work to do because we aren't at a 100% graduation rate yet. He concluded by saying that he feels there are great people in buildings and at the District office all supporting this work.

Chair Bessett thanked Mr. Collins and staff for leading the District in its progress. He also asked Mr. Collins for the graduation rates for comparable districts in our area. Mr. Collins said he would get that information for Mr. Bessett.

The Board took a short dinner break until 6:27 p.m.

4. SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH: INTERVIEW TRAINING

Director of Human Resources, Dustin Reese conducted a training for the board about protocol during the interview process for the new superintendent.

Mr. Reese shared a PowerPoint entitled “*Superintendent Search Interview Training*.” Three things were covered: an overview of nondiscrimination laws, an understanding of unconscious bias and best practices for interviewing.

Mr. Reese covered nondiscrimination laws including: Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII); Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA); and Oregon Fair Employment Practice Act.

Mr. Reese defined unconscious bias. He noted that all people had unconscious bias, and shared the quote, “*We all have unconscious bias; it doesn’t make us bad, it makes us human.*” Hiring committees needed to consider that fact throughout the process.

Mr. Reese explained the neuroscience behind unconscious bias. He said the brain receives about 11 million bits of information every second, however the brain can only consciously process 40 bits. This means the brain creates systems for mental short cuts to help process all the data. The unconscious mind deletes (ignores some information), distorts (emphasizes or fades other information), and generalizes (“that switch looks the same as the one lighting the room -- it too is a light switch”).

Mr. Reese shared facts about mental sorting. Mental sorting, how the brain sorted things into categories, was taught to people from many different sources over a lifetime (teachers, parents, media, etc.). Humans had sorting systems related to class, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, and more. It was an ever-present lens through which people viewed the world based on their experiences, media influences, parents, teachers, and peers. Mental sorting automatically filtered how people took in and reacted to information.

Mr. Reese explained these sorting tactics were efficient, but prone to error. Well intentioned individuals could act in ways that produce inequitable outcomes for different groups. Research suggested that automatic unconscious associations may not match explicit thoughts or beliefs. Also, people tended to rely more on mental shortcuts when they were tired, stressed, or rushed.

Mr. Reese shared an example of unconscious biases, identified by Harvard University. There were many discrepancies between gender and race, specifically in the hiring processes.

Mr. Reese told the Board there were ways to adapt and decrease bias, including exposure to systemic, well-designed research that documented the existence of bias processes. He concluded training wouldn’t be effective if the individual lacked motivation.

Mr. Reese introduced common interview biases. Those biases included confirmation bias, affective heuristic, halo and horn effect, contrast effect and the “similar to me” effect.

Mr. Reese explained that during the screening process, the Board may be asked for justifications and the criteria used in decision making. He also reminded Board members to be vigilant to the possibility that their criteria could shift as they evaluate different types of applicants (i.e. different genders). Mr. Reese recommended allowing adequate time to review materials and make decisions.

Mr. Reese advised the board on developing interview questions. There were many types of questions that could be used. How and when to use each type varied based on what information the Board was looking for from the candidates. Question types included:

- Behavioral based vs. theoretical based;
- Open ended vs. yes/no questions;
- Follow up questions.

Mr. Reese outlined guidelines for interviewing candidates. Prior to the first interview, Board members would take time to reaffirm the importance of a fair and equitable hiring process and hiring committee members would be reminded about implicit bias. Board members would specifically listen for inappropriate questions or comments during interviews, be encouraging and receptive to all candidates and limit discussion between interviews.

Mr. Smolnisky wanted the training on record; he thought it was good information for everyone.

Ms. Raven would like a list of potentially hazardous interview circumstances.

- **SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH UPDATE**

Following the training, Superintendent Smolnisky shared an update on the superintendent search process.

Ms. Bowden passed out a document outlining the timeline for the superintendent search. Mr. Smolnisky ran through the key dates.

Mr. Smolnisky explained the District was in the midst of recruiting folks for interview panels. Currently, the District had received 18 applications. The Board would need to meet and select people to participate.

The Board would meet Monday, February 4, 2019 at 7:30 p.m. If they did not finish, the Board would have a follow up meeting on February 11, 2019.

Mr. Smolnisky discussed some of the key dates and activities for the recruitment process.

Dr. Hernandez requested a list of those applicants selected out of the pool along with reasons as to why they were not selected to be included on the list of candidates to be shared with the board. Chair Bessett would discuss the possibility with Dr. Lowder, but he didn't want to put liability on the District.

Mr. Reese didn't feel that level of information should be shared with the Board. He stated the District contracted with Dr. Lowder's firm, and there had to be a level of trust in the firm's process. He thought it was appropriate to ask for the criteria used. Seeing that information might provide the Board more comfort in the selection process.

Mr. Smolnisky explained the three-day interview process. After candidates were narrowed down, they would be brought into Springfield for interviews. Candidates would move through three groups and each group would have its own focus. District staff, board members, and community members would be involved. At the end of day one, the three groups would debrief using the set of criteria to discuss the ideal superintendent. Those moving forward would interview on February 21, 2019 with the Board. The Board could decide if an additional interview would be needed. Site visits were planned for the following week and a decision would be announced by spring break.

Chair Bessett thought the board might want to meet on February 20, after community meetings, to reformat questions based on each group's feedback. Dr. Hernandez asked when interviews would be on February 21.

Mr. Smolnisky said times were not yet set. The Board needed to set aside enough time to talk, to ask questions, to answer the applicant's questions and for any follow up questions that the Board might have. They also needed sometime at the end interviews for deliberation.

Ms. Raven envisioned the board dedicating the whole day to interviews (i.e. 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.). Chair Bessett thought each candidate should be allotted an hour and a half, maximum.

Ms. Adams pointed out that in the past, the Board took candidates to dinner. Chair Bessett said leadership considered the option at length, but ultimately decided there was not enough time.

Mr. Smolnisky thought this process would allow staff and community members to become more involved in the hiring process and have more buy in once the person was selected.

Dr. Hernandez clarified the Board couldn't set interview times for February 21 since they were unsure how many applicants would be interviewed. Mr. Smolnisky replied yes.

Ms. Raven asked about the work done in presenting Springfield to candidates. Specifically, what information candidates already had. She was interested in seeing a brochure, or packet of information given to each candidate. Ms. Raven also saw value in taking the candidates the Board interviewed on a tour of the community.

Ms. McCulley told the Board the brochure was completed and was on the Superintendent Search section of the District website.

Ms. Adams asked about site visits. She wondered if just one Board member would go and if there would be multiple visits. Mr. Smolnisky said they would decide about site visits following the interviews. Ms. Adams wanted to ensure site visits were prioritized as they were very important. Chair Bessett added he wanted to be responsible in their decisions, and only do site visits for candidates the Board truly envisioned as the District superintendent.

5. WRAP UP AND NEXT STEPS

The Board discussed attendance for upcoming events.

Dr. Hernandez said there was a Blacks in Government Dinner on February 1, 2019 from 5:30-6:30 banquet at 7:00-8:30 at Valley River Inn. The District had one table. He added that the NAACP Freedom Fund Dinner was scheduled for February 15, 2019 at 6:00 pm at Valley River Inn. If Board members were interested in attending either dinner, they should email Ms. Bowden.

Ms. Raven shared there was a town hall at Lane ESD on February 6, 2019 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. The focus was on current school funding efforts.

Ms. Raven highlighted Lane County's Lobby Day on March 5, 2019 in Salem.

6. NEXT MEETING: February 11, 2019, 7:00pm business meeting.

7. ADJOURNMENT

With no other business, Mr. Bessett adjourned the meeting at 7:43 pm.

Following the adjournment, the Board met in Executive Session (non-public) pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(a) to consider the employment of a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent.

(Minutes recorded by Marina Brassfield)