

MINUTES

Work Session of the

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Corvallis School District 509J
1555 SW 35th Street
Corvallis, OR

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Gable called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. in Central Office Board Room, 1555 SW 35th Street, Corvallis. Chair Gable dispensed with the calling of the roll and the secretary recorded those present as listed below.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Cyrel Gable, Chair
Sara Gelsler, Vice Chair
Robert Baldwin, Member
Nell O'Malley, Member
Robert Johnson, Member
Kari Rieck, Member

BOARD MEMBERS EXCUSED

Joan Demarest, Member

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT

Holly Emery-Walen, CVHS

EXECUTIVE STAFF PRESENT

Jim Ford, Superintendent
Jeanne Holmes, Assistant to the Superintendent
Dawn Tarzian, Teaching and Learning Director
Sharon Thornagle, Director of Student Services
Kathy Rodeman, Business Services Director
Duane Jager, Technology Integration Manager
Julie Catala, Board Secretary

PRINCIPALS PRESENT

Julie McCann, Lincoln Elementary
Lynn Lahey, Garfield Elementary
Patty Pearson, Adams Elementary

GUEST

Steve Kelley, Lebanon Sch. Dist. Curriculum Director

A quorum was present and due notice had been published.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Gable explained the meeting was an educational work session for Board members and that no decisions would be made.

Chair Gable asked for Board volunteers to attend the next county taxing agency meeting in her place, as she could not attend.

III. NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

Superintendent Ford announced the meeting would be dedicated to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). He said one session was not enough to entirely grasp the act but that Teaching and Learning Director Dawn Tarzian would narrow it down for the presentation. He introduced Steve Kelley, Director of Curriculum for the Lebanon School District. He noted that in the spirit of collaboration, Albany and Corvallis districts had invited him to participate.

Ms. Tarzian stated the level of detail of the act is tremendous as well as it is just taking shape. As part of tonight's preparation she was able to obtain Oregon School Board Association materials that have changed since they were printed last spring.

Ms. Tarzian explained that the act is the latest version of federal monies initially set aside to assist impoverished students. There is no new money involved. It began in 1965 with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and came to encompass Eisenhower money, Chapter 1, and Title 1 funds. The NCLB was enacted in 2001. The two biggest changes are that states across the nation have similar requirements and for the first time are subject to federal sanctions when they do not meet the requirements.

Expenditures in some areas are dictated; the rest is at the district's discretion. If a school has 35% or more students in poverty there is more flexibility in spending. If over 40%, the money can be used for all the students in that school. Corvallis has five schools that qualify in these areas: Lincoln at 90%, Garfield at 64%, Mountain View at 40%, Wilson at 38%, Westland at 39-41%.

Ms. Tarzian reviewed a sample Corvallis school and the district as a whole as it compared to the NCLB criteria. She noted some hypothetical "failures" that could result in a school not meeting the requirements such as:

- Not all students taking the test, even those that were absent or whose parents wished the child to abstain
- Students who had registered as recently as the previous day failing to meet the mark
- Disabled or English as a Second Language students unable to complete the test or meet the passing criteria.

Each year the bar raises for compliance and by 2014 all students are to meet the criteria. Ms. Tarzian reviewed four years of increasing sanctions for non-complying schools. Sanctions range from sending letters home to parents informing them of the non-compliance, offering to transport students at non-complying schools to their school of choice, to loss of NCLB funding. Some districts are opting to locate their qualifying NCLB students at one school, spending all their NCLB funds there so that the other schools will not be negatively affected by non-compliance. If a school reduces their rate of non-compliance by 10%, sanctions would not be applied that year. Oregon does not require subgroups, such as Special Education students to perform at the level of the NCLB so some schools could be labeled as "excellent" on the State's report card but not meet Average Yearly Progress as identified by the NCLB, suffering the consequences.

Ms. Tarzian provided a Power Point presentation that included some web pages from the NCLB site that seemed to be contradictory. Ms. Tarzian related that most Americans are not well-informed regarding the Act, which could account for the lack of public outcry between what the Act says it aims to do and the dichotomy to which it leads. She reported that the state of Wyoming has refused federal funding.

The OSBA has provided a checklist of district policies that need to be checked for compliance with the NCLB.

Board members who spoke to the NCLB Act expressed their frustration and opposition to its structure and methods, though not its stated goals. Some of their comments follow:

RE: Dichotomy of goals and methods:

- It's not fair or adequate or appropriate to any kid, anywhere to build a system that's based on an impossibility (having Special Education students, as an example, perform at the same level as non Special Education students), monopolizing administrator and teacher time.
- All kids need to reach a heightened bar, they need to do better, that would be every single kid in every single sub-group but this doesn't do it.
- It's unrealistic, unfair, and it doesn't support the successful programs that the District has in place and which it could further implement if it didn't have to worry about this.
- The NCLB takes time away from what the District could be doing for kids. NCLB sounds good and lofty but it's deceiving. The District should take a position against it but not send the money back because the District is doing really good things with those dollars and I can't imagine inflicting that harm upon the kids that are counting on it but I think that it's essential that the District look at how this could potentially impact its program, not this year or next year, but if that bar raises every single year and there's so many obstacles to ever meeting those goals that eventually I think it's a foregone conclusion that public schools will have to close after this.
- Feels destroys opportunities for children, the very ones it's supposed to help.

RE: Stigmatizing students

- It stigmatizes English language learners. It stigmatizes learning disabled kids. It stigmatizes kids in poverty such that it's a disadvantage to any school or district to have them.
- Regarding the District currently re-registering Life Skills students at their home school so they won't drag the one school down where they meet, one Board member expressed the opinion that the District should not acquiesce in this way.

Miscellaneous Comments

- Feels pushing into vouchers and private schools
- With the current lack of funding the District should not be spending time on this.
- Discussion is exciting because have been enraged for a year and a half.
- Staff should spend as little time on this as possible except to inform.
- Accepting sanctions may be less than it would cost to remedy the "problem."

RE: Communicating to Public

- The District is not going to be able to accommodate truly authentic and vigorous learning for every child if the District has this kind of thing and I think it's the Board's responsibility to help people understand that, why something that sounds so good, is not. What could sound better than not leaving any child behind, having high standards for every kid, testing every kid, expecting the best of every kid, who can argue with that?
- I can't see the District altering what it's doing significantly due to this act, so the Board needs to find a method to communicate the dichotomies to the public.
- Communicate the Districts expectations are just as high but with limitations, realistic. (Regarding disabilities, etc.)
- The District needs to be very strong in its statements about this. It needs to state it is in agreement with what NCLB intends to provide and that it has a plan in place. The District does not need to deviate from its plan. The District should have a good communications package.

Director O'Malley stated the NCLB is an 1100 page document. She was impressed with Ms. Tarzian's absorption and conveyance. She offered an excerpt from a magazine for additional information on the topic. Chair Gable and Ms. Tarzian did the same, citing other sources. Ms. Tarzian added that Cheldelin Middle School was planning a forum for parents on the topic. Superintendent Ford reported there have not been a lot of conversations among superintendents about this yet. Some districts in Corvallis' educational service district are small, without a lot of subgroups, so they did well in the NCLB ratings. Mr. Kelley responded that the feeling is much the same in the Lebanon District even though most have not heard a presentation such as was provided this evening. Chair Gable stated the Board would talk more on this to clarify its position.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business Chair Gable adjourned the work session at 9:05 p.m.

Cyrel Gable, Chair

Jim Ford, Superintendent

Prepared by: Jolene Shute
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