

**MINUTES**

of the

**Special Meeting of the**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Corvallis School District 509J

1555 SW 35<sup>th</sup> Street

Corvallis, OR 97333

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chair Gable called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. in the Central Office Board Room, 1555 SW 35<sup>th</sup> 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 Gelser, Vice Chair (via speaker phone)  
Robert Baldwin, Member  
Kari Rieck, Member  
Nell O'Malley, Member  
Robert Johnson, Member  
Joan Demarest, Member

EXECUTIVE STAFF PRESENT

Jim Ford, Superintendent  
Ron Corbell, Assistant Superintendent  
Jeanne Holmes, Asst. to the Superintendent  
Dawn Tarzian, Teaching and Learning Director  
Fred Wright, Auxiliary Services Director  
Julie Catala, Executive Asst. to the  
Superintendent

PRINCIPALS PRESENT

Denise Gorthy, Jefferson Elementary

A quorum was present and due notice had been published.

**II. AGREEMENT WITH PEAK SPORTS FOR INSTALLATION AND OPERATION OF SOLAR PANELS AT LINCOLN SCHOOL**

Auxiliary Services Director Fred Wright came forward to introduce this item. He began by stating there were three corrections to the presented item. (See Supplemental Item #I-36 in the Official 2003-04 Board Minutes.):

- 1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph, 1<sup>st</sup> line: The word "Creative" should be replaced by the word "Clean" so the first line would read: Background: Solar CREEK (Clean Renewable Energy for Everyone's Kids) a community"

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph: 4<sup>th</sup> line: The number “2800” should be replaced by the number “3800” and the number “84” should be replaced by the number “129” so that the line would read: 3800 kw per year, which would equal \$129 per year that the District would pay to Peak Sports.”

Mr. Wright continued, saying his presentation would be very brief, recalling that citizen Chris Dymond came earlier before the Board in October of 2003 to explain the impetus of the program and provide information. If approved, the District would be entering into a partnership with local business Peak Sports and Solar Creek, a community group of volunteers. The Lincoln Elementary School project would include approximately \$20,000 worth of solar improvements including materials, fabrication of the units on top of the school, kiosks, video documentation, and student curriculum materials. Corvallis High School will also become a part of this endeavor through their robotics class volunteering to provide some custom fabrication.

Chair Gable questioned the juxtaposed statements in the item of “no cost to the District” and “\$129 per year that the District would pay to Peak Sports.” She questioned whether that implied the energy savings would outweigh the cost. Mr. Wright said that was basically the case, as after three years the equipment would belong to the District.

Director Baldwin noted several similar installations in Oregon schools. He said the educational component included social studies, science, and math and would allow students to understand the true cost of power in this country. He added that 80% of the power in Corvallis comes from coal though most citizens think it comes from Bonneville.

Mr. Wright explained a similar larger project for the new Corvallis High School is on hold pending the initial implementation at Lincoln Elementary. Director Baldwin added that it is in the community group’s sights and funds are lined up.

Mr. Wright stated because of time constraints around the project parties would like to move ahead as soon as possible. When the roof at Lincoln Elementary is replaced during seismic upgrades, likely next summer, solar project attachments to the roof deck will have to be replaced then, not a large ticket item.

**Motion #64:** Director Baldwin moved, Director O’Malley seconded, to authorize staff to enter into a contract with Peak Sports for Installation & Operation of Solar Panels at Lincoln Elementary School. Before signing a final contract, staff will have legal counsel review all contract language. The motion passed unanimously.

### **III. REPORT BY EARLY ENTRY POLICY COMMITTEE**

Chair Gable announced that this topic was appearing before the Board per their April 20, 2004 Special Meeting request to have staff review the current policy and make a recommendation as to whether a revision of the policy is warranted and noted the Board had received related materials prior to the meeting.

Teaching and Learning Director Dawn Tarzian began the presentation by introducing the presenters:

Ann Cook has been with District 28 years teaching kindergarten and first grade at Harding, Fairplay, Wilson, Jefferson, Hoover, and Inavale schools; she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in elementary education from the University of Texas and has taken classes at Portland State University, Lewis & Clark, Oregon State University and Seattle Pacific University.

Julie Oriard has been with the District 28 years teaching kindergarten through third grade at Franklin, Hoover, Adams, Inavale, and Wilson schools; she has a Bachelor of Arts in elementary education from Eastern Oregon State College and has taken classes from Foothill College, University of Missouri, University of Washington, University of Santa Clara, Seattle Pacific, Portland State University and Oregon State University.

Marianne Clausing-Lee has been with the District 31 years teaching kindergarten through second grade at Jefferson, Garfield, and Wilson schools, has been an instructional facilitator and is currently the District's half-time English-as-a-Second-Language coordinator, half-time kindergarten teacher; she has a Bachelor of Science in elementary education from St. Cloud State University, a Master of Science in early childhood education from Western Oregon State, a Doctorate of Education from Oregon State University and has taken classes from University of Oregon, Lewis and Clark, Portland State University and Linn-Benton Community College; and she has her standard administrator and superintendent certificates.

Ms. Tarzian stated Jefferson Principal Denise Gorthy was known to the Board.

A. OVERVIEW OF THE EARLY ENTRY POLICY COMMITTEE PROCESS – DENISE GORTHY

Ms. Gorthy began by stating there were others on the committee than the presenters. (See Supplemental Item VII-17 in the Official 2003-04 Board Minutes.) The committee is formed of District kindergarten teachers who have over 60 years combined experience, and a first grade teacher. Ms. Gorthy was present at their meetings as well as Ms. Tarzian.

Ms. Gorthy explained the committee surveyed all of the District kindergarten teachers and elementary principals and noted their comments can be found in the supplemental item. She also put out a general invitation to all District employees to submit their input, which a few did.

The committee looked at the current policy, which has no exceptions: a child must be five years old by September 1. The committee also looked at past policies, which carried the same September 1 determining date but also had a time frame for exceptions for birth dates to October 15 with assessments by District. The current policy was put in place in December 2001 so it has had just a couple of years in service. The committee looked at the acceptance percentage of students in the exception time frame under the previous policy. Ms. Gorthy referred to the Assessment Data and Costs chart in the middle of the supplemental item. They are duplicated below:

<b>Assessment Data and Costs</b>			
Year	Hours of Staff Time	Number of Students Applied	Number of Students Accepted
1999	32.5	15	5
2000	48.5	17	6
2001	48	13	5
Total	129	45	16 (a 35% acceptance rate)

48 hours x \$38 (estimated per hour charge) = \$1,824 which does not take into account time meeting with unhappy parents of unaccepted students.

District charged \$75 assessment fee; \$25 for scholarship student

Statistics have not been kept since the current policy was adopted though it has been recalled that about ten to fifteen inquiries have been received each year. Out of that total, two families have requested an exception.

Ms. Gorthy stated that the committee looked at published reasons to maintain or alter the current policy including other Oregon district policies. Resources are included in the supplemental item.

The committee considered several scenarios regarding early entry and kept in mind the premise that policies are for the good of most children.

Ms. Gorthy stated it was a fairly tight timeline to research the policy so their report represents that constraint and is not a comprehensive research of all that is available.

#### B. RESEARCH REVIEW – MARIANNE CLAUSING-LEE

Ms. Clausing-Lee stated most of her research fell into four categories, which are listed and elaborated below:

1. The exceptionally bright child, the 97 percentile intellectually gifted TAG (talented and gifted) child
2. Five year olds who are not ready
3. At-risk children who would perhaps be better off in kindergarten
4. Questioning whether bright children would be harmed if they are not able to enter early

#### 1. THE EXCEPTIONALLY BRIGHT CHILD, THE 97 PERCENTILE INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED TAG (TALENTED AND GIFTED) CHILD

Ms. Clausing-Lee said that students in kindergarten in the 97% percentile are identified as TAG. She said there is a difference between being intellectually gifted and academically gifted. Intellectually gifted is a logical problem solving method. It has nothing to with can they read, can they write, or can they do mathematics. The research talks about the top 3% intellectually gifted. Early entry is a form of acceleration that can happen any time during school career.

Some say acceleration is needed for academic stimulation. One fact she uncovered is that these students need 1.5 years acceleration, not just one, so they may need to be accelerated more than one once.

2. FIVE YEAR OLDS WHO ARE NOT READY

These may be students whose birth dates fall close to the deadline, who are socially immature and/or are small for sports. This is seen more often in boys than girls. The whole concept is about readiness for school. The District takes all 5 year olds without testing. There are mixed reviews about delayed entry. About 12% of children nationally are delayed entry into kindergarten.

3. AT-RISK CHILDREN WHO WOULD PERHAPS BE BETTER OFF IN KINDERGARTEN

One body of research suggests that early childhood education is good for all students. Head Start is based on that premise for at-risk children and suggests that that is where the focus should be as non-at-risk students are receiving stimulation the at-risk students are seen to be lacking.

4. QUESTIONING WHETHER BRIGHT CHILDREN WOULD BE HARMED IF THEY ARE NOT ABLE TO ENTER EARLY

The State Department of Education's Anita McClanahan in her article "What is the State's Position on Early Entry?" spoke to the long-term consequences of entering a child into school early. She stated that there is no research that shows the child is harmed if they are not allowed to enter school early. Ms. Clausing-Lee stated that if one thinks about that just a few steps further one could see that a bright child is not going to stop learning just because they are not in public schools.

Ms. Clausing-Lee ended her presentation with the following comments:

- Other areas of development besides intellectual giftedness need to be assessed to determine kindergarten readiness.
- Children under the previous policy were evaluated on multiple criteria.
- From the day children enter kindergarten teachers try to individualize to those children to meet their academic needs. Of course, with class sizes getting larger and resources smaller it is more challenging but teachers accommodate.

C. THE CURRENT CORVALLIS KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM – JULIE ORIARD

Ms. Oriard described the kindergarten experience. She stated it is a bridge from home to school or from pre-school where there is a minimum of a one to ten teacher to student ratio. Structured and unstructured opportunities are provided for children to learn. The curriculum is tailored to the developmental level of five and six year olds. Teachers support the transition to a more formal elementary setting. Teachers provide a safe, positive, nurturing environment that promotes social, emotional, intellectual, physical, artistic and interactive development. This is done by providing many experiences in which students learn to work and play independently, in

small groups, and in large groups. Teachers strive to teach students to be independent, self-directed learners, make good choices and follow directions. They are encouraged to think, problem solve, use their words to communicate with each other and adults. The curriculum is designed to offer many open-ended and hands-on experiences. Teachers adapt curriculum plans for each new student as they come into the classroom; they strive to meet the level of all children at all academic levels. A successful kindergarten experience is more than acquiring academic skills. It is learning how to be part of large or small groups, to listen, to share, take turns, follow directions, and transition from one activity to another. Children are encouraged to develop self-confidence and self-control, to be responsible, feel good about themselves as learners and respect each other. The social and emotional skills acquired during kindergarten are essential for future success in school. During the year, most kindergartners struggle at times. They cry, they get frustrated, they cling, they withdraw, and they miss their moms and dads. They need constant reinforcement from an adult. These emotional struggles occur when they are trying to make new friends and trying to fit into their new social world. When they cannot do things the way they picture it in their mind, often it is due to a lack of their skills in knowing how to solve problems in new situations. They do acquire these problem-solving skills over time. Developing small motor skills also takes time and practice. They also have body functions that they cannot recognize. They feel very overwhelmed at times when they are sick or when they get hurt either physically or emotionally. They are learning how to recognize all these things and communicate them to someone rather than acting out. All of this is happening in a group of 20-25 students with greater challenges as class sizes get larger. It is a wonderful year and the children that benefit the most are those that are really ready for this next stage in their development. It lays a foundation for future years.

D. SURVEY INFORMATION GATHERED AND KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT – ANN COOK

Ms. Cook began by explaining the previous policy was written in such a way that they were screening to look for the exceptional children, not assessing readiness level.

Many years ago she and Ms. Clausing-Lee developed the screening process that was used in their building, at the time Jefferson Elementary. Written information from the parent was gathered regarding the child, and parents and children were invited into the classroom. She and Ms. Clausing-Lee took turns interviewing the parent and assessing the child so that each of them had contact with the parent and child. With the onset of open enrollment in the District, parents went from school to school seeking early entry through a site-based assessment. The District then went to a central screening process. Then she, Ms. Clausing-Lee, and Ms. Oriard formed a team of three to screen children in August, to provide as much growth time for the children as possible. Parents completed a questionnaire. Ms. Clausing-Lee administered the test for TAG identification and performed the parent interview, if there was time. Ms. Cook and Ms. Oriard held a 2½-hour kindergarten for applicants where they participated in a mock kindergarten experience. One on one assessing was done and the children's "kindergarten" worked saved. The team looked at fine and gross motor skills, letter and sound knowledge, sorting, rhyming, and number skills. They had an assistant who took social interaction notes. At the end of 2.5 hours they sat down as a group to assess children and made recommendations. They felt the amount of paid time was not adequate to prepare materials and serve time in conferences with

disappointed parents who wanted clarification and justification. What she remembers most importantly was the part that was not easy, having to turn down families for early entrance. There were a lot of disappointed parents and children. Kindergarten orientation and registration is held in the spring so those who hoped for early entrance were participating. The assessment was in August so for those who were not accepted it was horrible. Repercussions of that process were really hard, telling parents of beautiful, talented, four-year old children that they were not as unique, smart, or capable as they had thought. Ms. Cook thinks a hard birth date criteria would be much less frustrating and disappointing than not being able to pass a test so she supports keeping the policy as it is.

Ms. Cook stated that in general, kindergarten teachers feel that a child's academics are not the major concern for considering early entry but the social and emotional levels. These are overriding, not just during the kindergarten years but throughout the school years. Kindergarten parents cannot see what their child will look like in middle school or high school when their peers are able to participate in things they cannot, such as driving. Now that parents are used to knowing the current policy teachers are getting older kindergartners which would provide an even greater mismatch to bring in the younger early entries. She stated that until kindergartners work through their emotional and social challenges their academics do not really shine.

Many teachers responding to the committee's survey cited benefits of starting when older and perhaps accelerating later when the school experience is known. After the teacher and elementary comments were received a short survey was sent to all twenty kindergarten teachers regarding their choice on retaining the current early entry policy. Elementary principals were informally polled. Nineteen of the twenty kindergarten teachers supported the current policy with one citing room for considering other options. Five of the seven elementary principals supported staying with the current policy while two felt there was room to look at other options for the exceptional child only.

E. OTHER POLICY OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND OTHER OPTIONS IF POLICY IS KEPT THE SAME – DENISE GORTHY

Ms. Gorthy cited the four possibilities the committee considered as they were outlined in the supplemental materials packet:

1. Make no change to the policy
2. Review the policy again five years from the last revision (December 2001)
3. Revise the policy to allow exceptions for birth dates that fall from September 2 through September 15 based on an assessment of cognitive, social, and physical development by a psychologist
4. Revise the policy to allow exceptions for birth dates that fall from September 2 through September 15 based on an assessment process of cognitive, social, and physical development by district staff

The committee also discussed that the closing date for the exceptions could be October 15 or December 1.

Assessing children earlier than August was also discussed though providing children the extra growth time was a concern as was available staff time.

The committee looked at other kindergarten entry age policies in Oregon. Six of the fourteen districts surveyed do not allow early entry. Of the eight districts that do allow early entry, closing birth dates for consideration ranged from the middle or end of September to the end of October with one having no closing date. Most of those districts used psychological assessments.

Private kindergartens in the area were surveyed as well. A number of those require aged 5 by September 1; a few have exceptions for early entry.

In the interest of time and in consideration that the Board had received the written packet of supplemental materials prior to the meeting, Chair Gable requested the Board move on to its discussion of the provided information. Ms. Gorthy complied, noting that with each of the four possibilities considered the committee listed its strengths and weaknesses. Some items appeared in both categories. In the fourth considered possibility where the cost was noted if District staff were to provide the assessment, the \$300-500 per child fee should actually read \$100-300.

F. RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE – DENISE GORTHY

Ms. Gorthy reported that the committee recommended that the policy remain as is.

**IV. BOARD DISCUSSION REGARDING EARLY ENTRY TO KINDERGARTEN POLICY**

Chair Gable opened the floor to Board questions.

Director Gelser questioned if children tested in the fall need to be determined to be on an even par with other kindergartners who meet the birth date criteria or if they need to be determined to be intellectually gifted. Ms. Gorthy replied the child would need to show exceptional ability and confirmed that this would be required of a child born September 2 but not of one born September 1.

Chair Gable clarified what she saw as options that evening regarding the subject:

- Option of making decision tonight in maintaining current policy; however, in communicating with an interested family it was indicated that the Board would provide an opportunity for oral testimony at its June meeting. To make the decision now would go against information provided to those who are highly interested in the issue.
- Make no decision and continue the discussion at the next (June) meeting
- In the next seven minutes decide to ask staff to draft a new policy, with enough discussion to provide very clear instructions to staff as to the direction of the new policy

She stated the original intention was to decide to alter the policy or not by the Board's June 28 meeting, though they are not required to do so by then. The date was chosen to accommodate

the needs of an interested family though a later date may still be accommodating. If a new policy were presented in June the Board could be asked to approve it on its first reading; though not typical, it can be done.

Ms. Tarzian stated the statute directs districts to enter children who are 5 by September 1 as eligible but allows for local districts to enter children early if they are academically, physically and socially ready. The local district has the responsibility to define what criteria they will use to determine readiness. She added that eligibility at this young age is hard to assess, as there is so much growth in one year, the younger the child the larger the developmental difference in one year.

In response to a question, Ms. Clausing-Lee stated consideration of a half-day or full-day kindergarten had no effect on granting exceptions under the previous policy as the quality of the programs is the same and it was unknown which program a child may attend.

Board members and Superintendent Ford stated their desire to have more time to express their views.

Director Demarest noted that the equity committee identified that communication is a concern so making a July decision would diminish the ability to communicate. She stated she opposed the committee recommendation though she respects their opinion. Her reason is that the District's mission is learning for all and fostering self-directed learning. She would direct staff to look further into the considered options.

Chair Gable stated it was her prerogative to move the discussion to the June agenda.

## **V. ADJOURN**

Chair Gable adjourned the Special Meeting just before 7 p.m. wherein the Board convened its regularly scheduled Budget Committee meeting.

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Cyrel Gable, Chair

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Jim Ford, Superintendent