

**MINUTES**

Work Session 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 O’Malley called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. in the Central Office Board Room, 1555 SW 35<sup>th</sup> Street, Corvallis. The secretary recorded those present as listed below.

<p><u>BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT</u>                  Nell O’Malley, Chair                  Kari Rieck, Vice Chair                  Helen Higgins                  Blake Rodman                  Matt Donohue                  Donna Keim                  Sara Gelser</p> <p><u>STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT</u>                  Lynn Hector, Corvallis High School                  Brayden Moore, Crescent Valley High School</p>	<p><u>EXECUTIVE STAFF PRESENT</u>                  Dawn Tarzian, Superintendent                  Mary McKay, Student Services Director                  Jeanne Holmes, Human Resources Director                  Kathy Rodeman, Business Services Director                  Fred Wright, Auxiliary Services Director                  Julie Catala, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent</p> <p><u>PRINCIPALS PRESENT</u>                  Gerry Kosanovic, Wilson Elementary                  Jay Conroy, Corvallis High School</p>
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A quorum was present and due notice had been published.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair O’Malley led the group in the pledge of allegiance.

**III. DISCUSSION REGARDING SCHOOL BOARD POLICY JC – SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AREAS**

Chair O'Malley introduced the topic by noting that 70% of the District’s students are attending their neighborhood schools. By revising the District’s School Attendance Areas Policy (JC)

enabling more equitable distribution of resources, it is positioning itself to remain one of the best in the state as it contracts in enrollment. She stated the meeting's goal was to integrate the Board's values into the policy so the superintendent can align the related administrative regulation.

Vice Chair Rieck expanded on the introduction by referencing the "homework packet" Board members were to view, which included a review of policies AB, BA, BFC, BFCA and she described the process the committee used to create the draft policy. She named the Policy Committee as consisting of Directors Higgins, Keim, and herself. She referred to a table of the value statements and the policy statement.

Each director in turn, and then the student representatives, provided their views on the topic:

Director Rodman expressed that he now realizes this policy could set the tone for the District over the next number of years in terms of how it manages its students and money and that limiting choice is required to some degree. He stated that the Board should hold true with its values and beliefs in terms of choice and allow Superintendent Tarzian to make needed adjustments. He asked how the District could offer an engineering-gear program at Crescent Valley High School, a nice theater at Corvallis High School, a core knowledge school, dual-immersion school, etcetera if we say that choice is going to be an exception. He does not feel choice should be an exception or that the District has the resources to offer everything at every school. He noted that the big changes are at the secondary level, not the elementary.

Director Keim reflected that even at the beginning of her eighteen years of having students in the District there were noticeable differences between the schools, noting that that happens naturally with the surrounding community who attend. She believes that if a parent wishes a different environment for their student they should be allowed to apply for transfer but not for single issues that can be solved within the school. Over the years she has seen reductions in offerings such as music and PE and has seen the negative impacts of choice.

Director Donohue expressed his opinion that the policy provides a general direction that will not solve any problems but the related administrative regulation will put that direction into reality. He stated that the District is seeing the consequences of choice. He further noted that the Equity Committee identified there were inequities in the ability of students to transfer. There are students who are just as trapped in their schools as if there were no transfer policy. He stated that if the District has a transfer policy it must simultaneously prioritize ability to access, working toward equity at each budget opportunity. Another problem with the current policy is marketing of schools and the competition – it is corrosive to the quality of education in the District. The board needs to make a statement that the District is composed of individual schools that work collaboratively to maximize resources.

Director Higgins contended that all the District's schools are good. The transfer policy is an exception policy that evolved into open enrollment; it needs to be scaled back to a transfer policy. She advocated for a simple policy, similar to the first draft that Superintendent Tarzian offered. Superintendent Tarzian's administrative regulations can address the exceptions that would qualify for transfer. She has heard from the community the impact that low enrollment is

having on the District's schools and stated that the board needs to support public education for all its students.

Chair O'Malley stated that the Board needs to find its basic philosophical common ground among its diverse values and have the policy reflect that. The policy needs to be flexible. She values bounded schools and feels people will adjust to less movement if it is not sudden and it is grandfathered in. She feels a self-fulfilling prophecy problem exists: the idea of different schools with different strengths is overblown. She stated that one can differentiate curriculum, and that is best done with lower class sizes. She concluded her comments by stating that it is important that the Board create a policy that reflects the balance of individual needs and district financial restrictions – not just a philosophy, but one grounded in reality.

Director Gelser stated that she recognized why Superintendent Tarzian created the related administrative regulations and that she would support them. She also stated that values need to be the policy's guiding statement and that openness to attend one's preferred school must be preserved within available resources, along with an awareness of equal ability to access. She asserted that the District is at the level of asking itself whether to have schools in alignment or whether to encourage specialization; the answer will be reflected in this policy and its administrative regulation. She expressed that if the District says transfers are an exception, then it needs to remove things like dual immersion, core knowledge and kindergarten options. She asserted that choice is not competition; it is that no two kids are the same. The more choices a child has the more successful s/he will be in school. She does not want to see a flat district where every school is the same.

Vice Chair Rieck noted that when the District had the most resources, there was no transfer policy; it came into existence only when the district started losing resources and schools. She also advocated for a simple policy and stated she strongly believes that the District is in a position where competition between schools causes hardship to staff, students, and parents. She stated that the policy should be driving District decisions for the next 5-10 years; she does not want to be changing the policy every year. There is no quick fix. She does not believe that the values in the current policy are for schools of choice – she thinks it was an exception to transfer. She is not for full open choice – boundary schools are critical to the learning of our students. There should be exceptions, such as 1:1 transfers. She concluded by stating that resources do not allow the District to have full choice and still provide what is needed in its schools.

Crescent Valley Student Representative Brayden Moore spoke to the value of family as the foundation of society and advocated long grandfather clauses to keep siblings together. He is concerned that not allowing grandfathering for all siblings will reduce minority enrollment. Grandfathering all siblings will keep the community strong.

Corvallis High School Student Representative Lynn Hector stated that lack of funding is the reason for the proposed changes and that people can make opportunities out of whatever problems are found. People will survive and be stronger. She recognized there is inequity in the District and endorsed a proposed policy change.

Board discussion ensued regarding the value statements and philosophies in the proposed policy and the process to reach consensus.

Members spoke to the need to keep the policy simple due to the many varying beliefs on the Board.

A summary of Superintendent Tarzian's comments:

- She referenced a progress report on Policy JC's administrative regulation that she had put at each of their places this evening. (See Supplemental Item #VII-22 of the Official 2005-06 Board Minutes.)
- She recommended tolerating some over-enrollment to allow siblings to stay together for the next three years. She noted that there is a value in the proposed administrative regulation of allowing siblings to attend the same school.
- Re: kindergarten – schools set them up to respond to their parents' needs as indicated on the registration card as to type of program preferred.
- She will be meeting with Zion Lutheran and Ashbrook Independent school directors to coordinate support for transfers from private to public schools.
- Re: the 7% variance at the secondary level – She reminded everyone that a school's physical capacity sets the limit at elementary and K-8 schools.

Vice Chair Rieck stated that the Committee would bring back another reading of the policy on February 27, incorporating suggested changes.

Members discussed the process to use on the 27<sup>th</sup> in order to vote at same meeting, which is preferred in order to allow staff to implement changes.

Director Gelsner expressed her frustration that prior to January 9 she did not know the School Attendance Areas policy would be an issue the Board would be addressing, one critical to the District. She recommended that future difficult policy discussions be planned to allow sufficient time for discussion and a notice to the board that these would be coming.

#### **IV. ADJOURNMENT**

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m., wherein the public was adjourned and the Board moved into Executive Session.

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Kari Rieck, Chair\*

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Dawn Tarzian, Superintendent

\*Chair at the time the minutes were submitted for adoption.

Prepared by: Julie Catala

Edited by: Jolene Shute

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