

**School District No. 1J, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Board Retreat of November 1, 2016**

**INFORMAL MINUTES**

A Retreat of the Board of Directors came to order at 4:09pm at the call of Chair Tom Koehler in the Mazama Conference Room of the Blanchard Education Service Center, 501 N. Dixon Street, Portland, Oregon, 97227.

There were present:

Board of Directors:

Tom Koehler, Chair  
Amy Kohnstamm, Vice-Chair  
Paul Anthony  
Steve Buel  
Julie Esparza Brown  
Pam Knowles  
Mike Rosen  
Aliemah Bradley, Student Representative

Staff:

Bob McKean, Interim Superintendent  
Antonio Lopez, Assistant Superintendent  
Chris Russo, Assistant Superintendent  
Harriet Adair, Assistant Superintendent  
Amanda Whalen, Chief of Staff  
Courtney Wilton, Interim Chief Operations  
Jerry Vincent, Chief School Modernization  
Sean Murray, Chief Human Resources  
Lorenzo Poe, Chief Equity and Partnerships  
Stephanie Harper, Interim General Counsel  
Courtney Westling, Dir. Government Relations  
Rosanne Powell, Board Office Manager

Guests:

Roger Kirchner  
Scott Bailey  
Bethany Barnes  
Beth Slovic  
Trever Cartwright, Facilitator

Chair Koehler stated that the purpose of the Retreat was to think about the District's work for the next six to nine months; the list was rather daunting, but with huge possibilities. The Board needs to be on the same page and in sync with staff. Superintendent McKean concurred, adding that there was a lot to do and that a shared commitment was needed to address the many issues. Mr. Cartwright reviewed the Working Agreements that the Board had agreed upon in July 2015.

**Board/Superintendent Partnership**

Superintendent McKean reviewed his *More Effective Board-Superintendent/Administration Team Work* document with the Board. His request was for the following: 1) follow Board Communication Protocols; 2) think carefully about what you ask your administration to do against the backdrop of the significant work required to achieve Board goals; 3) engage in a "no surprises" pact; 4) work through the Superintendent so that it does not undermine his effectiveness to do the Board's work; and, 5) revisit and follow the Board commitment regarding modeling respectful behavior and civil discourse for students and the community.

Director Buel commented that the Board's priorities were fine, but that they do not take up all of the Board's time. In addition, there is no equity in the District. Director Esparza Brown stated that all Board members believe in equity and having respectful dialogue was very important. Director Buel responded that he could not remain respectful if someone cuts him off when he is speaking. Director Buel added that, as an elected official, he needs to get the information he needs; but he does not have a real say - he has to convince his fellow Board members and one has to work outside of team work to do that. Director Kohnstamm stated that the Board's ability to work together was their strength, but they haven't talked much as a group about governance and best practices.

Director Knowles mentioned that equity permeates everything we do in the District, and that equity feeds into the Board priorities that have been established. It was when an individual Board member takes it upon themselves to go a different direction or takes an issue outside of their Board role. It was difficult to

build trust and understanding of others' perspectives when you only see them twice a month at a Board meeting. The Board's ability to cohesively work as a team on Board priorities was going to be tough; we need trust in each other and our focus should be on student achievement, but we may each see a different path to get there. Superintendent McKean stated that there were different ways to achieve a desired outcome and different views of what equity means. The Board needs to be at a higher level (hiring a Superintendent, creating policy), but some are at a lower level and just want to get what they want, but that is not the best way to do things. Director Buel commented that he felt he had to address to the lower level issues in order to correct what has occurred in the past by just letting issues go. Superintendent McKean asked where that had gotten the Board. Director Knowles responded that it resulted in the District losing 57 non-represented employees who resigned. Director Kohnstamm responded that it resulted in low employee morale and fear, a bad reputation as a District, Community Based Organizations questioning their work with us, and the loss of excellent personnel. Director Rosen asked what a Board member was supposed to do when they receive complaints or see problems. Director Esparza Brown mentioned that the Board has not even agreed about how they are going to work together, so how can they move forward on their priorities? Director Rosen stated that it was a governance issue. Chair Koehler suggested that a Retreat was needed on the issue of trusting each other. The Board, in general, agreed to the five team work items.

At 5:30pm, the Board took a 15 minute break.

### **Setting the Highest Priorities through June 2017**

Superintendent McKean stated that equity and student learning was the centerpiece of the Board priorities. Superintendent McKean and staff reviewed the *Areas of Focus* document with the Board.

Director Buel commented that the Board priorities do not line up with the Areas of Focus. Superintendent McKean responded that this was an attempt to get to that alignment. The document lists those global items that the Board needs to consider in alignment with their priorities. Director Esparza Brown stated that the work can be mapped and that was important to Board priorities. It was an important exercise to see how the work aligns with Board priorities, and that might help us to understand how we can come together. Director Rosen questioned when the Board will have a discussion on the performance measures that were being tracked. He would like to see an entire package and a Board discussion on the existing Board priorities and affirmation that they are aligned with the work being performed. Director Buel stated that the Board needs a report on how we are doing in the schools. Director Rosen asked if there was a strategy on filling the 57 non-represented vacancies. Superintendent McKean responded that the strategy may vary by department.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Board to return to Item 2 on the *Team Work* list regarding the work the Board will ask of administration. Was the Board comfortable with the request from the Superintendent? All Board members responded yes, with Director Rosen adding that he would be more comfortable with that item after the next work session. However, he does agree that the District work should focus on the Board priorities. Superintendent McKean thanked the Board and staff for their work.

### **Board Dynamic and Effectiveness**

Mr. Cartwright asked how Board Committees could work better. Chair Koehler stated that there had been mention of abolishing the Committee structure, but he feels that the Board will end up with a hybrid. It would require a Board discussion. Director Knowles asked if the Board was using staff's time in the best way. She had developed a Work Session strawman – it would require two Board Work Sessions a month – one in regards to Operations and the other in regards to Education. An example would be that the Business and Operations Committee and Audit Committee would fall under the Operations Work Session, and the Charter Committee and Teaching and Learning Committee would fall under the Education Work Session. Discussion occurred on committees vs. work sessions. Chair Koehler indicated that he likes the Committee structure as he believes they are more efficient, but there should be real purpose to each committee meeting and not just holding a meeting to meet. Director Kohnstamm stated that she felt there would be greater transparency if the Board held Work Sessions and it might be better for Board dynamics

in terms of trust as all Board members would receive the information at the same time. Right now, she feels disconnected with the work of committees that she does not serve on. Director Esparza Brown concurred. Director Rosen requested that Director Knowles send her strawman to the entire Board. It was agreed that Board members would send their responses/suggestions on the strawman back to Director Knowles by Friday, November 4<sup>th</sup>. Director Knowles will then compile all responses and the strawman would be discussed at the next Board Work Session on priorities.

Mr. Cartwright stated that each Board member plays a role in Board effectiveness and asked each member if there was one thing they would like to contribute to help the Board function better and what that would be. Director Knowles: understand one's perspectives. Director Buel: spend more time explaining things. Director Kohnstamm: take more time to understand one another's passions and priorities. Director Esparza Brown: getting to know each other better.

### **Public Comment**

Roger Kirchner stated that he has attended both Board committees and the Board operating as a whole. His observation is that a majority of Board members were present at every Committee meeting lately, so a hybrid might be worth trying.

Scott Bailey commented that the Board needs to work together respectfully and that the Education Options work really needed to be done.

### **ADJOURN**

Chair Koehler adjourned the meeting at 8:00pm.

Submitted by:

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Caren Huson-Quiniones, Board Clerk  
PPS Board of Education