

February 9, 2013

OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1J, MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON
JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA
PORTLAND, OREGON

A Special Public Hearing of the Board of Education on the Jefferson PK-8 Enrollment Balancing came to order at 10:00am at the call of Co-Chair Greg Belisle in the Cafeteria of Jefferson High School, 5210 N. Kerby Avenue, Portland, Oregon.

There were present:

Pam Knowles
Ruth Adkins
Bobbie Regan - *absent*
Trudy Sargent - *absent*
Martin Gonzalez, Co-Chair
Matt Morton
Greg Belisle, Co-Chair

Alexia Garcia, Student Representative

Staff

Carole Smith, Superintendent
Caren Huson-Quiniones, Board Senior Specialist

PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED JEFFERSON PK-8 ENROLLMENT BALANCING

Elizabeth Thiel: Two weeks ago, their cluster demanded a moratorium on school closures. Schools are the heart of their community. Their community has never stopped supporting their schools. There is once again a discussion of how we will disinvest in our community. They are being asked to decide what school to close. What will be this Board's legacy? Closing schools does not save money and it does not close the achievement gap. We need boundary adjustments across the District. We need a long-term plan and educational vision for our city. The Transfer Policy needs to be revised. The District should have been clearer on the Jefferson plan two years ago. There is no transparency. She requested the Board scrap the Superintendent's recommendation and the assumptions that lead to it.

Paul Anthony: His three children are in the Spanish Immersion Program at Beach School. Last year, the District closed their community school, and this year the District wants to close Chief Joseph. The Portland Plan is dependent upon retaining current schools. The City of Portland needs to take leverage to retain our neighborhood schools. Neighborhood schools are recognized as community resources.

Martha Ruttle: Has lived in NE Portland for 15 years. When a process is swift, you do great damage to families and communities. The District said it had to merge Humboldt and Boise as it was an emergency, yet the public discovered that you worked for over a year on the closure. The District has earned our distrust.

Julie Rogers: As funding continues to be unstable, closures are realities that we all have to accept. We have learned that the Jefferson cluster has suffered too many closures, and we will not tolerate inequities any longer. Students are not defined by the color of their skin. They are defined by the character in their heart. We all need to work together to create the best schools in the city and beyond.

Alex Rogers: If you cut his Special Education program at Jefferson, you will be putting him through hell.

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Felix Cohen: In the second grade at Chief Joseph. He wants to keep his school open. It has good teachers and great after-school programs. He feels trapped in the merger that is proposed. He asked the Board to not destroy Chief Joseph.

Melissa Frantz: She is a Chief Joseph parent. They have been given a lot of reasons this week to make this feel like a foregone decision. She asked staff to be accountable for the decisions they are making and asking the Board to accept. Do not close the school building. Another closed building in their neighborhood was unacceptable. The Community wants a three year minimum guarantee for the school with a task force working on solutions. Invest in the Community by allowing them to grow. This proposal contains a tailor made transfer policy. Respect the community and allow us to participate in a real way, and ensure that our teachers have a real voice.

Sarah Cloud: There needs to be a true community involvement process. They did not have that this year. The process should include everything from school configuration to programming. They want a long-term plan. Keep all school buildings open. Closing one school in the Jefferson cluster only makes all others weaker. Rebalance the entire District. Stop the cluster-by-cluster nonsense as it is not working. Implement a new transfer policy.

Julie David: Parent of a King student. There have been a lot of changes at King. She is leery about the proposal. Federal government funding has been paying for King. Locating ACCESS in the King building is not an acceptable solution. Both programs will want to grow. Placing both programs in one location will fill the building to full capacity. That creates an antagonistic situation. You cannot separate numbers from programming.

Trace Salmon: Co-locating ACCESS into the King school has to be an integrated program for it to work. King needs to grow. It should have been growing over the last six years. If King is to grow we cannot be in the same building with ACCESS and competing all the time. ACCESS seems to be a last resort for parents of TAG students to get placed. Parents are disappointed with TAG services across the District,

Angel Rodriguez: A Woodlawn parent who has a child with special needs. Believes in inclusion and working together to build communities of acceptance. We need schools that care about Special Education students. We need equity and past practices need to be changed. We need truth. Be our children's heroes.

Andy Roe: Parent of an Ockley Green student. Ockley Green wants PPS to look at the big picture and not make piecemeal decisions. They had been told that their Special Education classroom would be saved; but since have been told that it would not. Every time they come to District meetings, they wonder if the decisions are best for their children. They ask themselves if they should enroll their children elsewhere. They want a strong school with opportunity and support for the students.

Stephanie Hunter: Thanked the Board for building stability of Special Education in the Jefferson cluster. Their community is being destroyed. They lost their art teacher at the art magnet and leadership was not good. They thought hard work would be enough. Kindergartners were being suspended. Why would an under enrolled school want to get rid of kids? Why has Ockley Green been chosen to die? They want their community to stay together and they want their dignity. Ockley Green is not the bad school in the Jefferson cluster.

Michelle Moses: A Chief Joseph parent. She had hoped that she would be listened to. She wants to trust the District's intent. Turning Ockley Green into a junior middle college actually makes sense. She started to envision Jefferson being a high school that people would want to transfer into. Their west side counterparts have never had disruption at their schools. The District has not given the community the details in order for them to trust their proposal. You say you have not made a decision yet, but she does not know if that is true or not. Joe Galati should be in charge of the dual campus.

Sarah Roy: Chief Joseph parent. The recommendation is for Chief Joseph and Ockley Green to merge into a K-8 and operate as a dual campus. What measurable goals do you plan on accomplishing

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during this transition time? What specific indicators are you using to define the end of the transition? How do you intend to gather community and teacher input on leadership of the school and how will the final decision be made. Do you intend to, and do you have the funding, to get the facility up and running to its full potential? The Chief Joseph community came out strongly in favor of a middle school option for the cluster. If you intend to move forward with a K-8, you need to convince the community that resources will make it strong in order to be successful.

Lilliana Chirzill: Supports the proposal to merge the two schools and to make them integrate. The District has watched Ockley Green struggle, and it's time to make it work. Her child has a right to education. The District has not been funding Ockley Green. She is glad the proposal came out.

Alex Montfort: Has been living and breathing this too long and is worn out. The abuses have been going on in the Jefferson cluster for too long, The Transfer Policy encourages white flight and it needs to stop; you need a mixed racial school. That is how a school thrives. If you stop the transfer policy, they will come and they will invest. It will do great deeds to our little world to end the prejudices that exist. Boundaries that exist make no sense and are unbalanced.

Nancy Smith, Woodlawn parent. She is thrilled with the Superintendent's proposal. For the first time, she feels like the District has listened. She is glad that there are no recommended closures at this time, and glad that the Board will be looking at the transfer policy. Your equity policy is phenomenal and, for that reason, something needs to be done about the transfer policy.

Steven Smith: He has a Special Education child, and Woodlawn really took an interest in him. They have a multi-disciplinary team and care about his son's well-being. There is Jefferson pride in the neighborhood.

Katy Asher: The demographics of the neighborhood are changing. They need a viable, livable, equitable solution. They urge that Chief Joseph and Ockley Green campus remain open at least for the next three years as the transfer policy and boundaries are reviewed. Please put a stop to school closures.

Moira Koskey: Ockley Green parent. They have been part of the magnet program since kindergarten. She has two requests: the Ockley Green community is a tight knit group and they cannot lose those kids. You cannot take away their bus service. Special Education children will be scattered. They want to stay together and are adaptive. They need to make sure they are not pawns and scattered to the wind. Please help them stay together. If the proposal is approved, she would like to see a plan where the District allow the community to facilitate the merge of communities. She invited Chief Joseph families to visit Ockley Green.

Donita Jordan: She is the parent of three King students. Her concern is the transfer policy. King school represents pride; it gives kids pride in who they are and where they are from, and it gives them self-respect, Bringing ACCESS into the facility, but not integrating the students, would be a horrible thing to do.

Rafaella Hernandez: King School is a family. Closure or rearranging the school is not the thing to do. It will create over population. We need to work to strengthen education and not kill it. Take the King community into account; ACCESS needs its own building.

Susan Armitage: She has seen first-hand what happens to a community when a school closes. Young families did not want to live in the area any more. School closure change the population of the neighborhood. If Chief Joseph is destabilized, then the District will in fact destabilize the entire neighborhood.

Tim Ganey, Agrees with the District's decision to re-evaluate the transfer policy to strengthen our neighborhoods. The District needs to interview those families who have chosen to transfer their kids out of Jefferson. 49% of students decide to transfer out of the cluster - why?

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Nick Fenger: His daughter is the only white students in her King classroom; but is daughter is welcome there. She is accepted by her classmates and more of that needs to occur across the District.

Dawn Rinehart: Does not approve of closing Chief Joseph. The Board does not have to enact the Superintendent's recommendation in its entirety. Closing the Chief Joseph building is unnecessary now or even three years from now. The community is growing. The Transfer policy must be applied with fairness across the District. The Board needs to require that Special Education students are not displaced during this process. The Board should only approve a plan that includes concrete measures and is overseen by the community as they have a right to know what exactly the goals beyond filling buildings are. The community has a right to ask for accountability.

Jim Speers: Joe Galati has done remarkable work at Chief Joseph. The District should use Chief Joseph as an example for other schools. When you close a school, you close a community.

Doris Rink: Vernon provides her kids a community and stability. She understands that Vernon will not be closed, but yet today she heard that no decision has been made. Her kids have support at Vernon.

Barbara Nelson: She likes the idea of K-8 schools, and wants to keep all of the neighborhood schools. Condominiums could be built at the Ockley Green site.

Janet Strong: Asked the Board to keep all of the neighborhood schools open as they are the heart of their diverse communities. A middle school needs to be created in the Jefferson cluster, as they will soon have the numbers to support it. The District needs to adjust the transfer policy and boundaries. This process has created a tremendous unity and energy in the community – harness that energy and focus it in a positive direction to revitalize the cluster.

Sam Balto: With the option of bringing ACCESS to King, he would find it hard to teach healthy play when they would have two groups of students that won't be on the recess yard at the same time. How would he teach them equality? It is a family at King.

Lisa Collins: She was excited about the District Equity Policy, yet there seems to be structures that continue to include inequity. The transfer policy and the boundaries that are current go directly against the Equity Policy that the Board adopted. Just because you don't see black families at your meetings, don't be fooled that they don't care. They do.

lo Gonde: He is an IB Coordinator at King. The first thing they heard in this process was to create robust programs. Placing ACCESS at King just places more bodies in the building and he does not know how that will create a more robust program at King. The growth at King has been tremendous. He asked the question: why would King be lucky to receive ACCESS students? What they are doing now at King is working and they just want to grow.

Lisa Hatten: PPS has created a culture where North Portland families feel they have to find the right school for their kids. They have perceptions of the Jefferson cluster that are incorrect. She is concerned that King will fall off a cliff when their federal money goes away.

Scott Bailey: He cares deeply about our schools and has been watching this process with interest. A proposal was being passed around the room and he would love to know what the Board thinks about it. The community is ready to solve problems.

ADJOURN

Co-Chair Belisle adjourned the meeting at 11:54am.

Submitted by:

Caren C. Huson Quiniones, Sr. Board Specialist