

SILVER FALLS SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J
BOARD WORK SESSION

January 23, 2017
7:00 p.m.

District Office Conference Room

Attendance: Board members present were Chair Wally Lierman, Tom Buchholz, Aaron Koch, Tim Roth, Ervin Stadel, Ron Valoff and Todd White. Also present were Andy Bellando, Superintendent; Dandy Stevens, Assistant Superintendent; and Denise Childs, Board Secretary. Audience members included: Steve Nielsen, Business Manager; Jennifer Hannan, Director of Teaching and Learning; Justin Lieuallen, SHS Principal; Phillip Kelly, TOSA; and various community members. Press was present.

Chair Wally Lierman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and noted attendance.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

2015-16
Financial
Audit:

Steve Nielsen was pleased to report that the overall audit was a clean one with no suggested modifications. He then reviewed portions of the audit, which included: schedule of prior and current year audit findings; schedule of revenues, expenditures and changes in fund balance; notes to the basic financial statements; grant compliance review; and expenditures of federal awards schedule. Mr. Nielsen explained that the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) is the accepted standard-setting body for establishing governmental accounting and financial reporting principles.

During his report, Mr. Nielsen noted the proactive steps the District has taken to prepare for the PERS rate increases during the 2017-2019 biennium.

The Board thanked Mr. Nielsen for his report, the work he does, and seeing a healthy end balance.

2017-18
School
Calendar:

The Board members discussed with Mr. Bellando two draft options for the 2017-2018 school calendar. (Documentation given to the Board before the start of the meeting.) They reviewed the pros and cons for starting school either before or after Labor Day and aligning, as much as possible, with what other neighboring school districts are doing. During discussion, Dandy Stevens cautioned that there possibly should be a backup contingency plan since the first semester is six days shorter than the second semester. She explained that it could become a problem at the high school in having semester classes that teach content if there are snow days with school closures. Following discussion, the Board's consensus was for school to start after Labor Day. Mr. Bellando said he will be sending copies to the Teachers and Classified Associations for their input. The plan is to approve a 2017-2018 school calendar at the February 13 Regular Board Meeting.

Standards
Based
Grading
Report:

Jennifer Hannan (with Philip Kelly present) shared information on the status of Standards Based Grading in the District. She pointed out the shift in thinking from a class grade to mastering standards with a proficiency number rating. Mrs. Hannan described the progress made since initiating Standards Based Grading efforts a few years ago. Mrs. Hannan then reviewed and discussed with the Board what is not working with Standards Based Grading within the District:

- Inconsistent calculation formulas and reporting models. The proficiency model has some issues when converting to a percentage and a letter grade. This lack of

uniformity limits and makes it difficult for parents and advisors to understand, advocate, hold accountable and support how kids are doing in school.

- Perception that some calculation formulas being used within the District negatively impact Silverton High School students with their transcripts, when competing with other school districts (who do not use the same calculation formulas) in applying for scholarships, free tuition programs and admission to college.

During Mrs. Hannan's report, the Board members asked clarifying questions and/or shared their viewpoints:

Wally Lierman felt that it is important for grades 6-8, within our K-8 schools, to operate and evaluate the same way as Silverton Middle School. He also believes the District needs to be equal to other school districts in calculating grade results.

Todd White suggested going back to letter grades that everyone understands. He believes this is too important to experiment with when kids are trying to get into college.

Ron Valoff shared his concerns and understanding that, at Silverton High School, each department has their own system of tabulation and calculation. He felt that this takes our students and puts them on an unequal playing field versus other school districts in competing for scholarships, grants and getting placed in major league universities. Ron said this needs to be addressed as it is a serious disadvantage for our students. Mr. Bellando explained that departments have operated differently using the traditional standard percentage grading system. He said in this case because they are looking for uniformity, especially in the core content classes, they have found some disparity and confusion.

Ervin Stadeli noted that he thinks this proficiency grading system has created a lot of confusion with the students. He believes grading averages should be done the customary way; otherwise students will lose their confidence and spiral downhill.

Tim Roth felt that rating averages need to be consistent. Tim questioned what other school districts are doing with Standards Based Grading. Mrs. Hannan explained that some school districts went back to reporting their own grading model choice (due to HB 4150).

Wally wondered, if a child is not capable of learning a Standard, is there a way to still measure growth. Mrs. Hannan used as an example students who have IEPs (Individualized Education Plan) and how each child has their own standards written into their IEP that gets evaluated. Mr. Bellando added that an IEP has progress goals for each student and growth is measured based upon the goals and progress for each student. He explained that it does not always fit well into a school-wide grading system.

Phillip Kelly spoke on how his position focuses on instructional technology and the support he gives teachers in working with Standards Based Grading.

Mrs. Hannan next described the planned timeline to have a District Committee review what is not working with Standards Based Grading, change grade calculation formulas, and have a standardized conversion scale. She then shared the plan to get feedback from parents, teachers and students. Mrs. Hannan asked if the Board members could suggest any specific questions to include in the survey. The following ideas were shared:

Todd White suggested asking, if transfers are either in or out of the district, how other school districts will convert the data to their particular grading system.

Wally Lierman said that he has heard it is difficult for parents to understand how their children are doing at a specific time. He felt from tonight's discussion that hopefully this concern will be addressed and not continue being an issue.

Aaron Koch suggested a “yes” and “no” question of asking parents if they understand the grading system.

Wally then questioned how it is being addressed when a student is not meeting a Standard. Mrs. Hannan explained that this has been a work in progress for many years and so when they started Standards Based Grading, they also use a RIE (Remediation Intervention Extension) model for students who did not meet a particular Standard and other intervention programs. Tim Roth asked if they have the time, especially at the high school. Mrs. Hannan explained that different departments have to address intervention for their standards in different ways to work for their particular department.

Mrs. Hannan said that a benefit of running this calculation system is that it catches the Standards that students are not meeting and holds them accountable. She felt that things will work out as long as there is a clear delineation of what each of those numbers mean as a letter grade.

The Board thanked Mrs. Hannan for her report and the work she is doing. Chair Wally Lierman requested that Mrs. Hannan come back in either May or June to give an update.

Mr. Bellando felt it was important to add that, through Mrs. Hannan’s leadership, some good systems and efforts towards Standards Based Grading have been developed. He agreed that the reporting piece has created some concerns, confusion and questions with uniformity. Mr. Bellando said he wants the public community to be aware that those problems are being addressed.

Policy Review Committee Revisions:

Mr. Bellando asked the Board members how they would like to review upcoming policy revisions from the Policy Review Committee. He suggested a couple options for Sections C and D – have first reading at February meeting or wait until March when Sections A and B are approved. Board’s consensus is to have the first reading of Sections C and D at the February 13 Regular Board Meeting. Mr. Bellando said he will have those sections mailed this week to the Board members so they have time to review them before the February meeting.

OTHER

Adjourn: No further business was brought before the Board and the meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Chair of the Board

Superintendent-Clerk

Date

Date