

Greater Albany Public School District 8J
718 Seventh Avenue SW
Albany, Oregon 97321-2399



BOARD WORK SESSION
October 28, 2013 7:00 p.m.

Minutes

Maria Delapoer, Superintendent

CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Bricker called the Board Work Session to order at 7:00 p.m.

Frank Bricker	Board Chair
Jerry Boehme	Board Vice Chair
Sandi Gordon	Director
Micah Smith	Director
Lyle Utt	Director
Maria Delapoer	Superintendent
Frank Caropelo	Assistant Superintendent
Randy Lary	Human Resources Director
Peggy Blair	Secondary Curriculum Director
Tonja Everest	Elementary Curriculum Director
Ken Gilbert	Memorial Middle School Principal
Jason Hoffert-Hay	Timber Ridge School Principal
Heather Huzefka	Central Elementary School Principal/Student Services Coordinator

It was noted that a quorum of the Board was present.

Assistant Superintendent Frank Caropelo said that at the Board's request, staff had prepared a Work Session on the subject of standards-based grading. He said that the grading system was tied to the standards-based curriculum. He said that by the end of the Work Session, participants would have a clear understanding of the four parts of a standards-based learning and assessment cycle.

AGENDA TOPICS

OVERVIEW OF HOUSE BILL 2220

Mr. Caropelo said that he would begin with a discussion of House Bill 2220. He said that the Board members had in their packets, the text of the bill as well as Frequently Asked Questions. He said that he would refer to the latter document in his discussion of the bill.

He said that House Bill 2220 requires that at least once a year, districts must provide parents with a report indicating their student's level of achievement measured against the Oregon State Standards at the student's grade level. He noted that the student's grade must be based solely on the student's academic performance and must not be influenced by student behavior. He said that the information must be reported for all academic content standards and subject areas where there was academic content. He said that those subjects would include English-Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Health, PE,

Foreign Language, and the Arts. He said that the new Common Core Standards were adopted by the State of Oregon for English-Language Arts and Math. He said that the language of House Bill 2220 took effect January, 2013.

Mr. Caropelo said that academics and behavior were not defined in the law and were subject to local decisions. He said that districts could choose to combine the academics and behavior grades provided that on another part of the report card that academic performance was reported separately. He said that simply reporting whether the student met or did not meet the OAKS test was not sufficient in the eyes of the law. He explained that House Bill 2220 did allow districts to recombine academic and behavior grades into a final grade.

He said that the discussion that evening would describe what the district believed were the benefits of the standards-based system of teaching, learning and reporting. He said that reporting grades was just one part of a larger system. He said that grading was the part that was most visible to parents, but it needed to be built into a larger system of teaching, learning to standards, and assessment. He said that discussion that evening would consider the direction the district was going for grades K-8.

STANDARDS BASED GRADING AS COMPONENT OF STANDARDS BASED TEACHING

Secondary Curriculum Director Peggy Blair said that there were four pieces to a standards-based system, and the district was working very hard to put each of those elements in place.

She began with a discussion of “Standards.” She said that in this state, the standards included the Oregon content standards and the Common Core. She said that the standards must drive everything the district does. She said that educators needed to be honest with themselves as to how well they were incorporating the standards. She said that in the Greater Albany District, staff spent considerable time examining those standards. She said that in terms of what the district was doing with the Professional Learning Communities, this was what we want our students to know and be able to do.

Ms. Blair said that the second piece of the assessment was “Curriculum and Instruction.” She said that the strategies and learning opportunities used in the classroom were designed to help students reach the level of skill and understanding that was expected in the standards. She said that instruction included the materials and strategies used to teach students. She said that the most recent purchase of instructional materials was the Science adoption. She said that the criterion used in selecting those materials was how well the materials conformed to the state standards. She said that teachers would examine whether learning objectives were posted and whether they were addressing key things. She said that the curriculum piece would help answer the question “What do we do if students know or do not know what we want them to know.

She said that “Assessment” was the way educators gathered evidence of what students know and were able to do. She said that assessments were more than just tests. She said that teachers used the evidence to provide feedback to students to improve their learning. She said that students know in advance what they will need to learn, and they will have more than one opportunity to show they have met the standard. She said that their performance would be examined frequently.

Ms. Blair said that the fourth part of the standards-based system was “Grading & Reporting.” She said that this part was the most public. She said that grades were the summative marks assigned in the gradebook at

the end of the designated marking period. She explained that the evaluation was based on performance descriptors that were agreed upon and articulated in rubrics, not on a comparison to other students' performance. She said that a standards based system was about reporting to parents, students and everyone else, of progress toward academic standards.

She added that at the K-8 level, students were evaluated on Effort and Citizenship. She discussed a rubric used in determining a student's grade in each of those areas. She said that Timber Ridge School has evaluated students in Effort and Citizenship for several years.

Timber Ridge School principal Jason Hoffert-Hay said that his teachers used the rubric document during parent conferences. Superintendent Delapoer asked if the Citizenship and Effort standards were those adopted by the state. Ms. Blair said that they were local standards.

Elementary Curriculum Director Tonja Everest directed the Board's attention to Unit 1 of the Fourth Grade Math Pacing Guide. She said that the document was in its third year of revision. She said that the third page indicated Operations and Algebraic Thinking standards OA1 and OA4. She noted that the page was divided into sections marked "Big Ideas, Concepts, Essential Questions and Skills." She said that the fourth page provided greater detail including resources and applicable vocabulary. She said that a similar plan must be prepared for every lesson.

Mr. Caropelo asked if the standards were Common Core standards. Ms. Everest said that they were.

Mr. Caropelo said that the pacing guides were created by district teachers under the guidance of Timber Ridge School teacher and Math Leader Jennifer Vomocil. Mr. Caropelo said that the only part provided by the State was the content standard.

Ms. Blair discussed in detail, a separate pacing guide for a unit in seventh grade math. She said that the lesson plan was in its second year of revision. She said that the work represented a movement away from memorization and toward greater understanding of the concepts.

Director Smith asked of the student piece. He asked of the conduit from which students were obtaining the information. Director Boehme asked how the district knew that the work it was doing now would meet the stated Smarter Balanced structure in the future. Ms. Blair responded in detail. Mr. Caropelo added that because Common Core was a national standard, Greater Albany was able to learn from other states. Ms. Blair said that regardless of what the State of Oregon might direct, the standards-based instruction was helping teachers make better choices about how they taught their students.

Ms. Everest said that Smarter Balanced information was available on the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) site "Tool Kits." She said that other states were ahead of Oregon,

Ms. Everest said that standards were composed of two parts. She said that one part was the content that students had to know, and the second part was the performance level of what students had to be able to do. She said that a rubric could help to identify the student's level of understanding.

Director Smith asked how a student would know what the standards were. He asked how the student would know what kind of information would be needed to move from the "meet" to the "exceeds" level.

Ms. Everest explained how the teacher would identify the standards to the class.

Mr. Hoffert-Hay asked Timber Ridge teacher Jennifer Vomocil to elaborate. Ms. Vomocil said assessments were summative. She described how she would provide feedback to the students, noting that they received some kind of assessment each week. Director Smith acknowledged that students would understand what the expectations were.

Board Chair Bricker said that standards-based grading was not a one-time thing; He said that students have been working with this method for years. Central Elementary school principal Heather Huzefka said that this was not an attempt of a “gotcha.” She said that the expectations were clearly identified to the students. She said that clarity was increasing student learning.

Director Boehme asked what would happen to students who did not “meet” the instruction. He noted that at some point, the teacher would have to move on to the next lesson. Ms. Everest spoke of the PLC process. She described how the student might be assigned to an intervention. Mr. Hoffert-Hay said that the schools were working on a part of instruction that included a daily review. He said that the desire was that all of the students would get there, but he understood that not everyone would be able to do that. He said that there would be opportunities to remediate.

Ms. Everest spoke of the value of PLC sessions in developing a common language. She stated that if a teacher were leading an intervention class, knowing the specific standard the student did not master, would permit the teacher to better focus on the student’s needs.

Ms. Everest said that there will be opportunities to report to parents how the students were doing.

Director Smith asked of the objective of “Mastery.” He asked if that would be “meets” or “exceeds.” Ms. Everest replied that “meeting” the learning objectives was considered “mastery.”

Director Utt asked if “exceeds” placed the student halfway to the next standard objective. Ms. Everest replied that it was generally not that case. Mr. Hoffert-Hay said that some subjects require the students to work and improve on the same standards throughout the year. Ms. Blair stated that because math instruction has different strands, an “exceeds” on one strand did not specifically forecast success on a future objective.

Ms. Everest spoke of report cards. She turned the Board’s attention to a sample report card for a fourth grader. She began the discussion with a “Level 2” report card which in this example was printed on green paper. She focused on math instruction and noted that the document indicated the subject and a number of domains pertaining to math. As an example, she noted that the first domain was “Operations and Algebraic Thinking.”

She noted that parents would receive much more information. She said that an additional page provided a Domain Overview which indicated the three “clusters” that the school was measuring. The clusters for that domain included: “Use the four operations with whole numbers to solve problems, Gain familiarity with factors and multiples, and Generate and analyze patterns.” She noted that those clusters were also present in the Pacing Guides.

Director Boehme wondered if parents would understand the report. Ms. Everest said that was why communication with parents was critical. She said that information could be shared on parents' night and on the school website.

Ms. Vomocil said that most parents were looking at student assignments. She said that if the student "nearly met" the standard, the parent could look at the standards.

Director Boehme asked how a teacher with a large number of students would be able to enter grades for all of those children and keep the information current. Mr. Hoffert-Hay said that the electronic grade book had a drop-down menu of the standards. He said that when it was time to prepare report cards, the electronic gradebook would combine the all of the data.

Ms. Vomocil said that a clearly written rubric made the work manageable. She acknowledged that it was a work in progress.

Director Utt asked what was done for a student who was not getting it at all. Ms. Vomocil replied that teachers would do what they have always done; give the student more attention, look for other ways to deliver the instruction or ask other teachers for their help.

Director Gordon asked how parents were being educated. Ms. Huzefka said that communicating to parents about the standards-based grading was part of the system. Ms. Everest spoke of communication with students and their parents. She said that teachers and parents were having a much clearer picture of their student's learning.

Mr. Hoffert-Hay said that this is an evolving process. He said that much of the newer structure was Common Core language. He spoke of the importance of having clearly written documents that were easy to understand. He said that parent conferences were invaluable in helping parents understand the grading system.

Memorial Middle School principal Ken Gilbert said that Mr. Hoffert-Hay and his teachers were ahead of the other middle schools in implementing standards-based grading. He said that that the other three middle schools were combining two grading systems. He said that he was using the standards-based grading for Effort and the traditional system for academics. He said that he has not done much communicating about systems that would not be in place next year. He said that preferred to first work out the details with his teachers.

He related that he has heard positive feedback during the site council and parent club meetings of the idea behind standards-based system, but there was some frustration with the grading element. He said that the principal features of the standards-based structure were teachers working together, understanding what the standards were, determining how they were going to design their lessons, deciding how they were going to assess it, and identifying what they were going to do when the students knew it or do not know it.

Ms. Huzefka said that was part of what schools were doing. She said that the district was gaining understanding in the standards-based structure. She said that Timber Ridge School was ahead of other schools in the district in using that structure.

Director Gordon said that standards-based grading was frustrating for parents to understand. She said that she was one parent who's student did not get the message.

Ms. Huzefka said that the district wished to prepare students for life after school.

Mr. Gilbert said that some people have gotten the idea that homework does not matter. He said that was far from the truth.

Mr. Hoffert-Hay spoke of the value of the Effort grade. He said that parents and students have previously discounted the Effort mark. He said that Timber Ridge School has stated more forcefully the value of that grade. He said that when he speaks to parents, he tells them that the most important mark on the report card was the Effort grade. He said that effort matters. He said that all Timber Ridge School celebrations were about effort.

Ms. Everest said that the Effort criterion was clear.

DISTRICT PLAN FOR K-8, 9-12, FOR 2013-15

Mr. Caropelo said that he wished to discuss all of the work that was underway for the past several years to build the standards-based system. He noted that the Board received much of the information in little pieces and it was difficult to string it all together.

He spoke of teacher evaluations. He said that the teacher evaluation documents were prepared through the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) process. He said that it was really about clarity of expectations for teachers, to provide clarity and expectations to their students.

Mr. Caropelo said that one of the requirements of Senate Bill 290 was for each teacher to write a series of student learning and growth goals. He said that those goals would include targets for the progress their students would make during the year. He explained that growth would be measured against the standards.

Human Resources Director Randy Lary said that teacher evaluations were a work in process. He said that the work would dovetail with their understanding of an increased focus on standards.

Mr. Hoffert-Hay spoke of the work of the Professional Learning Communities.

Ms. Blair said that the district was just beginning its work at the middle school level. She said that she and the building principals had frequent conversations about the process. She said that when one discussed the four pieces of the standards-based system, people already understood that there were standards, and that teachers were working on instruction and learning opportunities. She said, however, that there were areas which needed to be shored-up were within the rubric of "How good is good enough?"

She said that at the middle school level, she would be bringing middle school teachers together who would examine; "What does student performance look like?" She said that a standards-based curriculum was difficult, but the district had a vision and a plan. She said that the district was getting there.

Ms. Everest spoke of staff professional development. She said that regarding the Common Core, the district had the math pacing guides. She said that the district still needed to develop the grading rubrics.

She said she and Ms. Huzefka were out talking to teachers. She said that many did not understand the grading portion of the standards-based system. She said that grading was the last piece and one of the smallest portions. She said that the larger pieces were understanding the standards and designing instruction to meet those standards.

Ms. Huzefka spoke of professional development for elementary teachers in standards-based grading and Pinnacle. She said that most elementary teachers have not used the Pinnacle student achievement reporting system but will have to do so next year.

Ms. Everest said that the district needed to develop proficiency rubrics. She said that the district would grow and get better.

Director Boehme said that a student would be a third grader only once. He asked if the students were getting all the learning they needed to move on. Ms. Everest responded. She said that it was a process of continuous improvement, but there would never be a time when one could say to the students that they have fully arrived. Mr. Hoffert-Hay agreed, stating that the unacceptable alternative was to do nothing.

Director Smith said that students were getting better and were learning more than ever. Director Boehme said that education was more difficult that it was even six years ago. He noted that his high school aged daughter was receiving more difficult and challenging curriculum than his son received before he graduated six years ago.

Mr. Caropelo spoke of the value of professional development. He said that the district had just three half-days of professional development time available. Mr. Hoffert-Hay said that the standards-based system was an evolutionary process.

Mr. Caropelo said that he evaluated data from the approximately 1,600 students who were sixth, seventh, or eighth graders last year. He examined both their final grade in their math course and how they performed on the OAKS math assessment. He noted that to earn a grade of “meets” on the statewide assessment, students would have to achieve above the 39th to 43rd percentile. He said that 365 students earned a final math grade of “A, B, or C” but did not “meet” the OAKS test. He said that indicated a disconnect between State assessment performance and grade point performance.

Mr. Hoffert-Hay said that a major driver of House Bill 2220 was actually about students entering college. He said that that there were a number of students who graduated with a grade of “A” but needed to take remedial courses when they got to college. He asked how “A” students could graduate from high school and but not be ready for college work.

Mr. Caropelo noted differences in gender. He said that of the students who earned a letter grade of “B” and “met” the statewide exam, there were 109 boys and 109 girls. He said that of the same students who earned a letter grade of “B”, there were 45 boys who “exceeded” the OAKS test and just 22 girls. He said that of the students who earned a letter grade of “B” and “nearly met” the OAKS test, there were 73 girls and 36 boys. He said that indicated to him that there were things other than academic ability that were figured into their letter grades. He said that created a false sense of what the student knows or does not know.

Director Utt said that he is the father of a seventh grader at Memorial Middle School. He said the information he is getting about his student's performance was better this year than last. Memorial Middle School principal Ken Gilbert said that the OAKS test was not an accurate measure of student achievement. He said that standards-based instruction would help teachers more accurately define what a student knows or does not know and if necessary, place the him or her in appropriate interventions to address the student's needs.

Mr. Caropelo also spoke of the OAKS test as an ineffective indicator of student learning. He said that there were also more than 100 sixth, seventh, or eighth grade students who earned a grade of "D" or "F" in their math course, but "met" the OAKS test.

EMPLOYABILITY CONCEPT

Mr. Caropelo said that he spoke earlier about separating student behavior from grades. He said, however, that behavior was vitally important. He said that it was incredibly important to our parents, our community, and to future employers. He said that South Albany High School principal Brent Belveal was working on a concept that would turn the Citizenship and Effort grades at the high school level into something called an "Employability" grade.

He said that students would be measured on the criteria employers tell the district was important for young people to have coming out of high school. He said that the idea was that the district could spend the next ten months working with area employers so that the grade would be meaningful for them. He suggested that there would be a shared understanding that when a student came out of an Albany high school, and earned an employability grade that was in a certain area, that was what the district believed that the graduate was ready to do. He emphasized that the employability grade would be separate from the academic grades. He invited Mr. Belveal to address the Board.

Mr. Belveal said that he was asked to participate in a Workforce Development group. He said that the group was composed of the largest employers in the community, primarily those engaged in manufacturing. He said that he had been involved in workforce development for a number of years. He said that previously, one of the employers stated that he would no longer hire an eighteen year old graduate from one of the Albany high schools.

He said that the reality of the situation was that the potential employers really had no idea about the qualities of the recent graduate. He said that some students were able to "wow" a teacher into getting a good grade. He said that there were young persons who could "wow" the employer into hiring them, but if the employer asked the school about the graduate, the school might say, "We couldn't get that student to come to school, I don't know how you will get him to come to work."

Mr. Belveal said that he wished to have some kind of employability grade. He said that business leaders wanted employees who would be on time, work with others, take constructive criticism and make adjustments. He said that he wanted the grade to have some kind of authenticity or reliability. He said that the business community was interested if every high school in Albany used the same criteria.

Mr. Caropelo said that the concept would require a lot of work with employers, teachers, and all three high schools to get them involved in the development. He said that it was a concept that the district

believed the community could support and would be meaningful for graduates coming out of Albany high schools.

Director Gordon suggested getting bankers involved as well. She said that she knew several bank people who would participate in the task force.

Board Chair Bricker said that there needed to be employer buy-in and employer enforcement. He said that one of the problems the district had with programs in the past was that employers were not interested. He said that unless an employer was willing to state that he would not hire an applicant with an employability grade below a certain mark, the district would be wasting its time. He said that if area employers did not use the grade, students would know that and the district would have nothing.

Director Smith said that he looked at the program differently. He said that employers who ignored the grade were the ones who would be missing out. He said that graduates with high employability marks would flock to the employers who valued the measures.

He said that 49,500 jobs went unfilled this summer in the state of Oregon. He said that there would be jobs for the students with the high employability grades. He suggested that it was a mark that graduates could carry with them to employment.

Ms. Delapoe said that businesses were hungry for 18 year olds with necessary skills and work habits.

Director Boehme suggested that the Albany employability measure could carry to other areas in the State.

Director Utt recalled that in years past, Oregon State University hired graduates of West Albany High School over a second year computer degree person, because the West Albany High School graduates knew their field. He estimated that the employability score could help Albany graduates get jobs while in college.

Director Boehme said that there might be a place in the employability grade to factor in job experience.

Director Smith said that the employability factor was great, but he suggested that the district first focus on implementing standards-based grading across the district.

Mr. Belveal said that one of the components of the employability grade could be attendance, which was easy to measure. He said that the employability grade could be one method to reward the student with good attendance. He explained that currently, there was no incentive for students to attend every day. He said that some students could maintain their grades without attending class. He explained that while South Albany High School attendance averaged 90 percent, the percentage of students who were actually in class 90 percent of the time was just 70 percent. He said that meant that many students were figuring out how to get by without being in class. He asked what that might be teaching the students about their employability skills.

Director Boehme asked how colleges would evaluate standards-based grading. Mr. Hoffert-Hay said that colleges looked more closely at AP courses and international baccalaureate classes than at grade point averages.

Ms. Blair said that there were ways to have a grade point average (GPA) in a standards-based structure. She said that the marks could be derived from the number of standards the student met. She said, however, that the process would require considerable work.

Director Boehme said that he wanted colleges to be able to recognize the student's achievements.

Ms. Everest said that some high schools graduate students without grades, but their students still get into college. She said that there are other students without high school diplomas who still get into college. She said that good grades may open the door for the college to look at the student, but colleges examine more than grades.

Ms. Blair said that colleges placed more value in the ACT and SAT exams than high school grades.

Mr. Caropelo said that some high school graduates need remedial instruction at the college level.

Director Smith said that the Dallas School District has proficiency-based grading and the schools provide a GPA. He said that colleges have told the Dallas district that colleges were enthusiastic about proficiency-based grading because admissions officials would then know more about the student coming in.

Mr. Caropelo clarified that proficiency-based grading would not identify that the student earned a grade of 70 on an exam. Instead, the grade might reflect that the student completed seven of ten learning objectives. He said, however, that the district was not proposing standards-based grading at the high school at the present time as that would still require considerable work. He said that the district was focusing upon getting a K-8 system in place.

He said that the bottom line was that the district believed the standards-based grading system did a better job of reporting to parents, teachers and students themselves what the students knew and were able to do. He said that student achievement could be reported without confusing the grading with the behaviors that came along with learning that could either support or hinder student performance. He said that he believed that the grading system could aid the district in doing a better job helping students know where they were. He said that a driver of student learning was self-assessing what they know and do not know. He said this was the key element that the system would provide.

Director Gordon asked if there was any standards-based grading at the high schools. Mr. Belveal said that all of the high school instruction was based upon standards. Mr. Caropelo commented that all of the instruction referenced the standards, but he could not say that all of the instruction was as fully focused upon the standards as he wished.

Mr. Hoffert-Hay said that he heard anecdotally that former Timber Ridge students have asked high school teachers for feedback as to the standards that they needed to address. He said that the students wanted the

teachers to say, "If you do this and this, it will raise your grade." He said that often the teachers were unable to respond because they did not yet have the standards delineated.

Director Smith asked about subjects without pacing guides. Ms. Blair said that all of the subjects have standards although the district did not have pacing guides for each course.

Director Boehme asked why the district was not seeking standards-based grading for all grades. Mr. Caropelo replied that K-8 was the place to begin and the district could transition the high schools as they were able. Mr. Belveal said that the transition at the high school level might be more challenging. Ms. Delapoer said that as students and their parents came up through K-8, the demand for standards-based grading at the high school level would be there. Board Chair Bricker said that if elementary and middle teachers could change, so could the high school teachers. Director Gordon said that high school teachers were already moving to standards-based grading.

Mr. Caropelo said that he compared the ninth grade, end-of-semester grades of South Albany High School students who came from Calapooia Middle School where the students earned the traditional letter grades with students who came from Timber Ridge School where they experienced standards-based grading. He said that there was no statistical difference in the distribution of grades at the end of the first high school semester.

Ms. Huzefka said that she made notes of the directors' questions. She projected that parents would be asking the same questions. She said that it was the goal of the staff to give the Directors the information and understanding they needed to communicate with the public.

Board Chair Bricker said that information sent out to parents had to be understandable.

Ms. Delapoer said that the best method of communication was the teacher sitting across the table at conferences and speaking directly with the parent.

Director Boehme said that his daughter was learning more now than in high school than she could have years ago. He said that he knows that because she was learning more now she would do better in college, and get a better job in the future.

Director Smith said that the standards-based grading would permit professionals in the classroom to teach to the needs of every student. He said that every student could demonstrate, in their own manner, that they have learned the material. He said that no student would have the opportunity to fall through the cracks. He said that students would be taught in a way that they could learn.

Director Utt said that he has an elementary and a middle school student. He said that as an elementary school parent, other elementary school parents ask him why they were not seeing the same grading system at the elementary and middle school levels. He said that Mr. Caropelo partially answered that. He asked however, why the Pinnacle program was not available at the elementary school level.

Ms. Huzefka said that was a topic for a future discussion, but she commented that elementary teachers were not as well trained in using the Pinnacle program.

Ms. Everest said that there was considerable work to do at each level.

Mr. Caropelo thanked the Board for their interest and attention.

ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Bricker adjourned the Work Session at 9:13 p.m.

Frank Bricker, Board Chair

Maria Delapoer, Superintendent

(Recorded by Jim Haggart)

Business and Report Items - Document Reference (filed with original minutes)

Copies of documents presented for action and report purposes are located in the district audit folder prepared for permanent record.