

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



REGULAR BOARD MEETING
December 15, 2014 7:00 p.m.

Minutes

Maria Delapoer, Superintendent

CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Boehme called the regular meeting of the School Board to order at 7:00 p.m.

Jerry Boehme	Board Chair
Micah Smith	gave advance notice of his absence
Frank Bricker	Director
Sandi Gordon	gave advance notice of her absence
Lyle Utt	Director
Stephanie Dilbone	Student Board Member
Nate Burman	Student Board Member
Maria Delapoer	Superintendent
Tonja Everest	Assistant Superintendent
Randy Lary	Human Resources Director
Russell Allen	Business and Operations Director

A list of others present at the meeting is filed with the original minutes. It was noted that a quorum of the Board was present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chair Boehme led participants in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CORE PURPOSE/GOALS

Student Board Member Stephanie Dilbone began the meeting with a review of the district's Core Purpose and Strategic Goals:

Core Purpose: Educate and inspire all students to reach their full potential, equipped to be positive, contributing members of society.

Strategic Goals:

- We provide every student with challenging and motivating learning experiences that lead to continuous growth.
- We instill in every student the character traits that enable them to understand and interact in the world, appreciating and valuing differences.
- Our students thrive because every community member is a stakeholder and takes responsibility for the success of every student.

SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS AND INTRODUCTIONS

MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT REPORTER

Executive Assistant Jim Haggart introduced Memorial Middle School Student Reporter Ceanne Elliot. He said that she is an eighth grader taking Algebra, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Advanced Band where she plays the flute, Jazz Band where she plays the piano, and Health. Her favorite subject is Band.

He said that Miss Harlan plays the violin and competes in tennis. Her brothers include Brenden, a first grader at Liberty Elementary; Hayden, a fourth grader at Liberty Elementary; and Justin, a seventh grader at Memorial Middle School. Her parents are Candace and Dean Elliott.

STUDENT REPORTER

Memorial Middle School Student Reporter Ceanne addressed the Board. The text of her report is provided as an attachment to these minutes.

Board Chair Boehme thanked Miss Elliot for her report.

STUDENT ALL - STARS

Avery Nahormiak, Anna Givens, Gavin Baird, Audrey Simpson and Benjamin Johnson of Oak Grove Elementary; and Khamphrachanh Manivanh, Jackson McKay, and Jason White of Periwinkle Elementary School were recognized. Grant Moen, Gabriel Ayala. Elena Stein and Caroline Gao of North Albany Elementary and Sage Bodily, Lincoln Noonan, Nakyah Rethlefsen, Liliana Childress and Emma Larsen were also honored.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1) Minutes from November 17, 2014 Regular Board Meeting
- 2) Personnel (with Addendum)
- 3) *EEA, Student Transportation Services*
- 4) *EEACA, School Bus Driver Examination and Training*
- 5) *KGB, Public Content on District Property*

Board Chair Boehme stated that if there were no objections the Board would approve the Consent Agenda. There were no objections. Board Chair Boehme DECLARED THE ACTION DECIDED by UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

BOARD REPORTS

LEGISLATIVE LIAISON REPORT

Superintendent Maria Delapoer distributed several documents to the Board. She said that the Governor's budget was released in early December and one of the documents she provided discussed the State School Fund. She said that the current School Fund funding level during the 2013-15 biennium was \$6.65 billion dollars. She said that the Governor's proposed School Fund budget for the 2015-17 biennium was \$6.69 billion. She said that amount did not include an additional \$218 million for full-day kindergarten. She said that the total was then \$6.914 billion.

She said that Oregon superintendents believed that schools would need \$7.3 billion to maintain existing programs or \$7.5 billion with the \$218 million for full-day kindergarten. She explained that the Governor's budget identified funding for Pre-K programs, third grade reading proficiency, ninth grade on-track to graduate, and Career and Technical Education.

She said that she met earlier that day with State Representative Andy Olson to speak about education funding levels. She said that on January 15, the education service district would host a discussion for legislators, board chairs and superintendents. She said that COSA and OSBA were preparing "talking points" of information as were area superintendents.

Ms. Delapoer spoke of the advanced diploma program and stated that similar programs were under fire because they drew \$8-12 million from the State School Fund. She said that she met with Oregon Chief Education Officer Nancy Golden several weeks ago to discuss funding for the advanced diploma program. She said that Ms. Golden was supportive of the concept and was willing to look at alternate methods of funding. She said that there was a bill before the Legislature that would fund the advanced diploma out of the State School Fund but at a reduced rate. She said that the same proposal would be targeted toward disadvantaged, under-represented or first generation students. She said that she had not seen a proposal that would do away with the advanced diploma program but that was still a possibility.

WORKING GROUP REPORTS

None.

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

None.

STUDENT REPORTS

South Albany High School Student Board Member Stephanie Dilbone said that winter sports were underway and the basketball team had its first competition. She said that the dance team participated in a competition and earned second and third place awards. She said that the last performance of "You Are a Good Man Charlie Brown" would be that evening. She said that the choir went caroling earlier that day and visited the district office. She said that everyone was looking forward to Winter Break.

West Albany High School Student Board Member Nate Burman said that West Albany winter sports, including basketball, swimming and wrestling had begun. He said that there would be a choir competition later that evening at the high school. He said that the Job Fair would be the following day at Linn Benton Community College. He said that West Albany students were hosting a sharing tree to provide gifts for needy families.

DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN

None.

REPORTS

MCKINSTRY PROJECT CLOSE-OUT

Facilities Supervisor Doug Pigman, introduced Project Manager David McKay and representatives

from McKinstry and CCI (controls subcontractor) and said that they would provide a status update of the district-wide energy controls project.

Mr. McKay said that he was the project manager since 2004. He declared that the project was substantially complete. He said that the work was the product of a lot of hard work by many people. He said that there were only a few items to be adjusted. He said that the project was performing as designed. He stated that the heating and ventilation controls at each of the schools were completely reworked and all the programming and logic was new. He said that the work was verified by CCI, verified by McKinstry, and checked again by the district.

Mr. Pigman said that the warrantee program would begin on December 31, 2014.

McKinstry representative Tom Konicke thanked the members of the Board and remarked that the project was a long time coming and he appreciated everyone's patience. He noted that the project was a rework of the entire system as agreed. He said that it was a normally 3-4 year project condensed into just one year. He repeated that substantial completion had been met, but the one-year warrantee period would give everyone an opportunity to correct any new issues. He described his company's 24-hour call center for addressing concerns.

Mr. Pigman asked for an estimate of the number of issues addressed by the team. A McKinstry representative said that the project involved more than 2,100 issues resolved, 12,000 physical points, and 650 object items.

Board Chair Boehme asked about the warrantee. Mr. Pigman responded in detail. He said that the district was responsible for all of the hardware but the warrantee covered the programming.

Mr. McKay said that construction was tough. He said that good companies finish strong. He thanked McKinstry and CCI for the commitment to ending the project in strong shape.

Board Chair Boehme said that he appreciated the work and said that he knew that the district was in better shape than ever before.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Assistant Superintendent Tonja Everest said that she would discuss preparations toward offering full-day kindergarten for the 2015-16 school year and outline a variety of options for housing the students. She also said that she wanted to preserve important resources for early intervention learning opportunities

She began the discussion with a summary of the number of classrooms available at each of the 4 schools in North Albany. She said that Fairmount School has five classrooms, Fir Grove School has 7 classrooms, Oak Grove has 12 classrooms and North Albany elementary has 10 classrooms. She said that one additional classroom at each location would be reserved for a library or intervention space.

Ms. Everest spoke of the entering assumptions. She said that there were currently four classes of kindergarten students at the North Albany schools but she estimated the requirement would go to 5

classes of kinders in the coming year as fewer kindergarten students would go to private schools for all-day instruction. She also projected that Oak Grove School would need two second grade classes as the overflow students now at North Albany Elementary School would return.

She said that North Albany Elementary, with a current configuration of two classrooms per grade (K-5) would need one addition classroom in the coming year. She said, however, that the campus had limited space for the installation of a modular classroom. She said that any option that considered a modular classroom would require the space and utilities to site a modular.

Ms. Everest said that the district would need additional funding for administration, an office manager and a custodian for each additional school opened.

She said that she would discuss the options considered to date and identify the concerns and benefits of each. She said that Option 1 would open Fairmount School as a kindergarten hub and would use 13 classrooms at Oak Grove School and 10 classrooms at North Albany Elementary School for grades 1-5 at each campus. She said that the option would require less travel time for kindergartners and would provide space for the developmental kindergarten at Fairmount School. She said, however, that the program would displace the Family Tree Relief Nursery and would provide no room for growth at Oak Grove or North Albany Elementary schools.

Ms. Everest said that Option 2 would open Fir Grove School as a kindergarten hub and would use 13 classrooms at Oak Grove School and 10 classrooms at North Albany Elementary School for grades 1-5 at each campus. She said that the option would provide space at Fir Grove for the developmental kindergarten and early intervention programs but travel time to those programs would be longer. She said that the option did not do enough for Oak Grove School.

She said that Option 3 would open Fir Grove School and return to the traditional structure with Fir Grove School serving students in grades K-2 and Oak Grove School serving students in grades 3-5. She said that there would be space for the developmental kindergarten and early intervention programs at Oak Grove School. She said that North Albany Elementary School could be configured with two classrooms each for grades K-5 but that would require the addition of a modular classroom at that site.

Ms. Everest said that Option 4 would open Fir Grove School to all kindergarten and first grade students in North Albany. She said that Oak Grove would serve all second and third graders in North Albany and North Albany Elementary School would serve all fourth and fifth graders. She said that there would be space for the developmental kindergarten and early intervention programs at Oak Grove School. She explained that the option would require more school transitions.

She said that Option 5 would open Fir Grove School to all kindergarten students in North Albany. She said that Oak Grove would serve all first, second and third graders in North Albany and North Albany Elementary school would serve all students in grades four and five. She said that there would be space for the developmental kindergarten and early intervention programs at Fir Grove School. She said that this option would require adding a modular classroom at Oak Grove School.

Ms. Everest said that Option 6 was similar to Option 2 in that it would open Fir Grove School as a kindergarten hub for all of North Albany. She said, however, that there was concern that Oak Grove School would soon outgrow itself. She said that beginning with the 2016-17 school year, first graders from the Oak Grove Elementary attendance area would remain at Fir Grove School for first grade, while first graders from the North Albany Elementary School attendance area would move on to North Albany Elementary for first through fifth grades. She said that this option would eliminate the need for additional modular classrooms but would be awkward to parents. She said that the option would leave North Albany Elementary without any free classrooms.

Mr. Allen spoke of North Albany Elementary School and explained that having no spare classrooms need not be a concern. He said that the school presently had a large number of transfer students who could be returned to their attendance area school if necessary and having two classrooms for each grade one through five would be sufficient.

She said that Option 7 would reopen both Fir Grove and Fairmount Schools at the kindergarten and first grade levels. North Albany Elementary School would serve students in grades 2-4 and Oak Grove School would serve students in Grades 2-4 plus all students in grade 5. She said that this option would displace the Family Tree Relief Nursery and would incur the cost of opening two schools.

Director Utt observed that there were no simple solutions.

Ms. Everest said that she needed to gather additional information. She suggested that several of the options were “non-starters.”

Director Bricker cautioned against short-term solutions. He recommended that the district look five or six years out in planning for full-day kindergarten

Ms. Delapoer said that enrollment projections for the North Albany area did not forecast a large growth in the next five years.

Board Chair Boehme asked about enrollment at North Albany Elementary School. He noted that the school had approximately 30 transfer students and asked that if the transfers students were returned to their neighborhood schools would that free up a classroom. Ms. Everest responded in detail, noting that it was likely the transfer students were spread across the grades. She said that there were also advantages in not having blended classes.

Board Chair Boehme commented about modular classrooms. He noted that the district replaced several modular classrooms at Tangent Elementary School with permanent construction. He asked if bricks and mortar classrooms might be preferable. Facilities Director Doug Pigman spoke of city requirements regarding set-backs from property lines. He said that permanent construction might be simpler but one had to look at septic system capacities and possibly parking.

Board Chair Boehme said that modular classrooms might be short term fix, but it might make sense to build new classrooms at another site. He said that he understood that additional classrooms would put additional stress on rest rooms and cafeteria spaces.

Ms. Everest noted that Fir Grove School did not have a kitchen.

Board Chair Boehme projected that North Albany growth would continue into the future.

Mr. Allen spoke of Oak Grove School and noted that the district recently added two modular classrooms at that site. He said that the enrollment was now at 335 children, which by Albany standards was a large school, but the school had just one gymnasium, very inadequate kitchen facilities, and no stage. He said that if one looked at adding capacity, one also had to consider the limitations of the common spaces.

Board Chair Boehme said that the district needed to look at the long term.

Student Board Member Nate Burman asked how the district could expand if the district did not have the funds to do what it needed to now. Board Chair Boehme replied that the construction of additional classrooms would require a school bond.

Student Board Member Stephanie Dilbone asked if the district was considering the construction of a new school. Board Chair Boehme said that there were no current plans to do so.

Director Bricker said that Fir Grove School was limited by its septic system. Mr. Pigman spoke of the sewage/pumping system at Oak Grove School. Mr. Allen said that enrollment at the school was close to the amount at which the sewer system would be a limiting factor.

Board Chair Boehme said that none of the options were perfect. He asked, if a new school was built in the North Albany area to house all North Albany students, how large would the school have to be. Mr. Allen replied that the school would have to support at least 700 students which would be large, but not unheard of in larger cities. Ms. Everest said that there could be some economies of scale and greater educational opportunities in replacing a number of small schools with one larger campus. She said that option was not on the table for the coming fall.

Director Bricker said that the district needed to have something in place in September.

Director Utt asked if Option 4, which would have grades K and 1 at Fir Grove School, grades 2 and 3 at Oak Grove School and grades 4 and 5 at North Albany Elementary School would provide some economy of scale. Ms. Everest said that it could provide instructional economies of scale.

Board Chair Boehme said that some of the options might cause parents to have children at three different elementary schools. Ms. Everest said that she considered that possibility but noted that many Albany families have children at elementary, middle and high school campuses.

Mr. Pigman spoke of modular costs. He said that modular classrooms were at a premium now and if the district wanted to purchase a modular it should do so as soon as possible.

Board Chair Boehme asked of the cost of a modular site review. Mr. Pigman estimated the expense at \$500 per site. Board Chair Boehme suggested that the district request site surveys now at each

of the locations it was considering modular classrooms. Mr. Allen said that he would work with Mr. Pigman to receive those surveys.

TRANSFER DATA

Superintendent Maria Delapoer said that the Board packets contained a summary of inter-district transfers for the previous five years. She noted that the laws regarding transfers had changed such that the receiving district could no longer select some students and not select others.

She said that the second page of the document provided a summary of in-district transfers. She said that information was provided by school at the elementary and middle school levels and by grade level at the high schools. She said that the data indicated the number of transfers which were requested and the number which were approved. She said that most of the requests were approved but a determining factor was whether the school had classroom space for additional students.

Ms. Delapoer said that the same document summarized high school transfer requests for the past five years. She noted that transfers at the tenth through twelfth grades were often for students who began high school at one location and wanted to continue at the same campus after their families moved to a location served by the other high school.

Director Utt asked about elementary transfers. He asked if the numbers included students who transferred several years ago and wished to continue at the same campus. Ms. Delapoer said that it did.

Board Chair Boehme asked about inter-district transfers. Ms. Delapoer said that part of this was a timing issue. She said that the district might want to address in-district transfers first before considering students from outside the district.

Ms. Everest said that the transfer process had to be thoughtful. She suggested processing in-district transfers first. Ms. Delapoer said that many out-of-district transfer students have been enrolled in Albany for several years. She said that the district might have to reconsider timelines.

Director Utt asked if an inter-district transfer student could request a particular school. Director Bricker replied that the family could request a particular school but district could direct where the child would attend.

Ms. Delapoer said that South Albany and West Albany High Schools were nearly equal in enrollment. She cautioned that if the district were to change its transfer procedures, the schools could become out of balance in size.

OLD BUSINESS

DISTRICT FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Business and Operations Director Russ Allen said that the Board packets contained a listing of the individuals who expressed an interest in participating on the District Facilities Advisory Committee. He recommended that the applicants be named to the committee.

Action: Director Bricker moved to approve the membership of the District Facilities Advisory Committee as presented. Motion APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Board Chair Boehme asked if additional names could be added later. Mr. Allen replied that they could be brought back to the Board.

DFAC FACILATOR (DLR CONTRACT)

Business and Operations Director Russ Allen recommended that the District enter into a contract with DLR Group, architecture and planning firm, to facilitate the work of the District Facilities Advisory Committee. He recommended the "Alternative Proposal" in the amount of \$84,400.

Action: Director Bricker moved to approve the alternate contract proposal in the amount of \$84,400 with DLR Group as presented. Motion APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

NEW BUSINESS

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH COMMITTEE

Board Chair Jerry Boehme said that the district website contained a link to the application for the Superintendent Screening Committee. He estimated that 20 people would be needed for the committee.

Director Bricker asked that a description of the committee's responsibilities be added to the application. Board Chair Boehme emphasized that it would be an advisory committee.

Board Chair Boehme said that the search process was open for applicants and would be ongoing through February 2, 2015.

BOARD POLICIES, ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION, WELLNESS

The Oregon Department of Education made revisions to Oregon SMART Snacks to comply with federal SMART Snacks and Oregon School Nutrition Standards, setting new minimums and requirements for snacks and beverages served or sold throughout the day on school property. Revisions recommended by the Oregon School Boards Association would bring Board Policy *EFA*, *Local Wellness Program*, Board Policy *EFAA*, *District Nutrition and Food Services*, and Administrative Regulation *EFAA-AR*, *Reimbursable School Meals and Milk Programs* into compliance.

Human Resources Director Randy Lary spoke of Board Policy *EFA*, *Local Wellness Program* which contained language to bring the district into compliance with the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010. He said that he was involved in the policy because what was decided to be deleted. He said that House Bill 2650 from 2007 was deleted because it would not take effect until the 2017-19 biennium. He said that the law would require a weekly minimum number of minutes of physical education at the K-8 level. He noted that in two years, the district would have to accommodate that law.

Business and Operations Director Russ Allen said that revisions to Board Policy *EFAA* and Administrative Regulation *EFAA-AR*, would bring the district directives up to speed with current law. He said that the documents reflected what the district was already doing.

BOARD POLICY, TRANSFERS

Assistant Superintendent Tonja Everest said that the Oregon Board of Education revised rules relating to Free and Appropriate Education, now placing the responsibility on the attending district of a qualifying student. She said that the proposed revisions to Board Policy *JECB, Admission of Nonresident Students* were recommended by the Oregon School Boards Association.

BOARD POLICY, SUPPORT SERVICES

Business and Operations Director Russ Allen said that during the 2010 Special Session, the Legislature passed [ORS 339.345](#) which required each school campus to have at least one Automated External Defibrillator (AED) on premises. He said that compliance was required on or before January 1, 2015. He said that the district currently had AEDs on the following campuses: South Albany High School, West Albany High School, Memorial Middle School, Clover Ridge Elementary and North Albany Elementary. He reported that the district ordered and received 15 additional AEDs which would ensure that each school had one AED and each high school had two (one for the main campus and one for the athletic facilities). He said that new Board Policy *EBBCC, Use of Automated External Defibrillator* provided guidance.

Board Chair Boehme asked where the devices would be placed at each school. Mr. Allen said that the facilities department would work with each school to determine the best location for that campus.

Student Board member Nate Burman asked about the Good Samaritan law. Mr. Allen said that the district wanted the AED's to be used by trained personnel. He said that the First Aid course included instruction in the devices. He said that there were First Aid trained people at every school. He acknowledged that the device was designed to be used in an emergency by anyone. He said that if a person were using the AED for all the right reasons, the Good Samaritan Law would apply to them.

Director Utt said that some schools might need more than one AED.

BOARD POLICIES, ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION, MEDICATIONS

Executive Assistant Jim Haggart said that subsequent to Senate Bill 611 from the 2013 Legislative session, the Oregon Board of Education adopted revisions to Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 581-021-0037. He said that the revisions clarified: the instruction or training school districts were required to receive; the content and need for appropriate permissions from parents/guardians or other qualified individuals that includes instructions for administering medication; the district personnel that may be designated to administer prescription or nonprescription medication to a student; and when a district might allow self-administration of medication by a student.

He said that because of the large volume of small adjustments to Administrative Regulation *JHCD/JHCDA-AR, Nonprescription/Prescription Medications*, and Board Policies *JHCD, Nonprescription Medication*, and *JHCDA, Prescription Medication*, the documents were presented as "replacements."

Mr. Haggart said that Board Policy *JHCD*, previously entitled “*Administering Non-injectable Medicines to Students*” had been simplified to “*Non-Prescription Medication*.” He said that other language has been simplified so that the new document was half the length of the earlier edition.

He said that its companion document, Board Policy *JHCDA*, previously entitled “*Administering Injectable Medicines to Students*” was been simplified to “*Prescription Medication*.” He said that both the old and new language spoke of a medical treatment plan for the administering of medications but the new language indicated that if the student violated the medical protocol, the district could revoke the permission given to a student to self-administer a medication.

Mr. Haggart said that new language in the same document stated that a premeasured dose of epinephrine may be administered by designated, trained district staff to any student or other individual on school premises, who the personnel believed, in good faith, was experiencing a severe allergic reaction, regardless of whether the student or individual had a prescription for epinephrine. He said that this was a new direction away from treating only individuals with a prescription. He related that in another district, a custodian experienced a severe allergic reaction and a fellow employee injected him with epinephrine and saved his life.

He said that Administrative Regulation *JHCD/JHCDA-AR* had its title simplified to “*Prescription/Non-prescription Medication*.” He said that most of the language changes were cosmetic. He said that the last three paragraphs addressed immunity from criminal or civil damages for good faith administering of epinephrine.

Mr. Haggart said that epinephrine could be life-saving to a person who really needed it, but would likely not cause harm to a person if injected, later turned out to not need the medication. He said that some school staff at each school, all bus drivers, and most Community After School Program staff members were trained in the use of the epipen.

Board Chair Boehme directed that the policies be referred to the Consent Agenda of the next Board meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

PARENT CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE DATA

Assistant Superintendent Tonja Everest said that she provided in the packet a summary of parent participation in the November parent conferences.

Director Bricker asked if high school conferences were worth the two days of lost instruction. He noted that spring conferences were eliminated several years ago. Ms. Everest said that she would ask the high schools.

Student Board member Nate Burman estimated that the parents teachers most wanted to see did not come to conferences.

VAM AWARDS FOR TIF SCHOOLS

Assistant Superintendent Tonja Everest said that the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) schools that

exceeded a certain benchmark could earn a monetary incentive. She said that Calapooia Middle School and Sunrise Elementary School earned the recognition by out-performing their comparer schools.

Director Utt asked if the scores were graded on a curve. Ms. Everest replied that the scores instead used a complex, statistical model which considered a number of factors.

ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Boehme said that the AIM Meeting would be December 16. Director Bricker and Board Chair Boehme said that they could participate. He said that Winter Break would begin December 22. He said that the next Regular Board Meeting would be January 12, 2015.

Board Chair Boehme adjourned the Board meeting at 8:58 p.m.

Jerry Boehme, Board Chair

Maria Delapoer, Superintendent

(Recorded by Jim Haggart)

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

Student Report
Ceanne Elliot
Memorial Middle School
December 15, 2014

Good evening District leaders, Chairman and other Board members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight. As Mr. Haggart said, my name is Ceanne Elliott and I am an eighth grader at Memorial Middle School.

Being an eighth grader, I think a lot about high school, what classes I'm going to take, and what activities await. But then, I also think of the comfort of Memorial, all of the awesome teachers and staff that we have at our school and especially our principal and vice principal. Can I just have a round of applause for Mr. Gilbert and Mrs. Hollenberg? They are both so much fun to have at our school and not to mention they are amazing people, but that doesn't mean that they can be transferred to another school. They need to stay where they are. I am really going to miss Mr. Gilbert and Mrs. Hollenberg next year. Actually you can transfer them to West if you want. I wouldn't mind.

Just a quick note, Memorial has tons of new teachers and staff this year. We welcome Ms. Hendrix, Mrs. Pigg, Mr. Hinkle, Mr. Smith, Mr. Robinson, Ms. Adair, Mrs. Dodge and Mrs. Bartell to our school.

Like Mr. Haggart said, I play flute in advanced band and piano in the jazz band and a couple of weeks ago there was a band and choir concert and it was so much fun. I love listening to the roaring applause after my brother does an amazing solo in jazz band, the applause after a song and the little mistakes we all make and then complain about after the concert. During band concerts, I feel as if the band is just one big family, and we all have something in common: we all have an interest in music. Unless you are one of those kids being forced to do band. Then I guess band isn't as fun for them. But even the kids that don't really like band, you'll always see them laughing and having fun with their friends at concerts and field trips.

I feel so privileged to be able to do two band subjects during school. Two years ago, jazz band was an activity that was after school, back when I wasn't in it. Last year, it became a class during school, which is way more convenient for both the kids and our band director. In order to be in jazz band, you have to be in intermediate or advanced band, and I really feel like having jazz band helps motivate kids to stay in band. I would also like to say that we have an amazing band director, Mrs. Buchert, and I'm so grateful that I have her. Oh, and by the way, the band needs a lot more instruments and repairs done, but that costs quite a bit of money...hint, hint.

The next thing I would like to talk about is the big change in the grading system. In most of my classes in the beginning of the year, this argument came up: why change the grading system to 4's, 3's, 2's, 1's, and 0's from A's, B's, C's, D's and F's. Most kids in my classes asked who would be motivated to do well on homework, quizzes or tests, just to get a 3 or 4? And 4's are hard to get. I don't mean to brag, but I'm a straight-A student and when I get my test back, and see a 3, which is a "meet" that doesn't make me as happy as an "A" would, because I want to "exceed."

Every year at school we have “Bear Bucks.” Bear Bucks are very popular at Memorial and you’ll see huge lines when the Bear Buck store is open. We continue to have a growing selection of items at the Bear Bucks store such as candy, food, sweatshirts, slinkies, and bracelets. Although the 6th and 7th graders get Bear Bucks regularly, I think the 8th graders could get those more often to increase popularity. Unfortunately, the Bear Buck store does not sell candy at Nutrition Break, because the whole point of Nutrition Break is to eat a snack. Well, a healthy snack.

It seems like every year our school gets a new schedule. At least, that’s what it’s been like in my three years of middle school. This year our schedule has cut down some time from classes and extra time has been put into Bear Den, which is kind of like a homework help class. I think having a class where we can do homework is great, because now more kids are starting to turn in assignments on time. Another thing that is kind of new is Nutrition Break. We had it last year, but this year it’s five minutes shorter because of have Bear Den. Nutrition Break is, as I said earlier, a time where you can either walk around or go to the cafeteria and eat a snack. I think this also helps some kids who don’t eat breakfast because they can get a time to eat without getting in trouble for eating in the halls.

In November, we had our gardening class give out Thanksgiving baskets to West Albany High School and they also grew enough vegetables to provide four families Thanksgiving dinner. Then, we also had the drama club perform a play, “The Outsiders,” which they have been working hard on. We also had the Cookie Dough fundraiser and many kids participated. The first week of November was Red Ribbon Week and I learned a lot of new things about drugs in health.

It seems like December is the busiest month at our school, with many events happening. First, we have Brandon’s Buddies Toy Drive, at the Doernbecher’s Children’s Hospital, which is in memory of Brandon Aufranc. Donations of new books, toys, art supplies, and other items that help patients and their families during their stay at the hospital will be accepted in the lobby December 1 through 19. Next we had our Book Fair which began on December 6 and ended on December 12.

This week is Spirit Week at Memorial, being the last week of school before Winter Break, and all the grades are participating. Two weeks ago, the Drama Club had a craft fair and it was a huge success as it always is. Last but not least, we have our annual Student-Staff volleyball Assembly, and everyone is talking about it at school.

So that’s what has been going on at Memorial! I love middle school, and am really going to miss it next year. Thanks again for the opportunity to give a report on my school.