

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



BOARD WORK SESSION
May 11, 2015 5:30 p.m.

Minutes

Maria Delapoer, Superintendent

CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Boehme called the Board Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m.

Jerry Boehme	Board Chair
Micah Smith	Board Vice Chair
Sandi Gordon	Director
Frank Bricker	Director
Lyle Utt	Director
Maria Delapoer	Superintendent
Tonja Everest	Assistant Superintendent
Randy Lary	Human Resources Director
Russ Allen	Business and Operation Director

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chair Boehme led participants in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Chair Boehme said that the purpose of the work session was to surface issues to be clarified and questions to be answered regarding a proposal to re-structure Central and Takena Elementary Schools into sister schools. He said that the Board wanted to give priority to parents and community members who had not previously addressed the Board. He said that the Board would call upon people who had questions that had not previously been addressed. He said that Board members would respond to questions or call upon staff for information.

DISCUSSION

Rachel Streitberger of 1237 12th Avenue SW in Albany said that her daughter will start kindergarten next year. She said that she lives directly across the street from Takena School. She stated that it did not make sense to move her daughter to another school.

Sarah Butler of 905 14th Avenue SW said that she has a daughter at Central School and will have another child entering kindergarten in 2016. She said that she was against the proposal. She said that she has many friends who are teachers. She said that she believed that collaboration was beneficial but the proposed model was not right for their school or their community. She said that her children are the third generation of their family to attend Central School. She reported that she and her husband bought their house, in part, because it was in the Central neighborhood. She said that she wanted her children to attend the same

school all six years. She said that according to the sister school plan, her older daughter would have to move to a different campus twice in the first six years of her education. She said that she wanted her daughters to attend Central School together. She said that she wanted to drop off and pick up both of her elementary children at the same school as she did not want either of her daughters to ride the bus. She asked the Board not to change two whole schools into two half schools.

Breyane Smith of 1082 8th Avenue SW in Albany said that her children are latchkey kids but that is the way it has to be. She said that they live close to Takena School. She said that under the proposal, her older daughter would have to transition to school by bus. She said that it seemed like the proposal was rushed. She said that parents received very short notice about the proposal. She estimated that parents were involved only because the word leaked out. She asked why this was the first time she was given an opportunity to express her opinion. She said that the proposal did not seem right.

Israel Balvaneda of 1070 16th Avenue SW in Albany said that English was not his first language. He stated that the plan would not work. He said that his son is a third grader and next year his daughter will be a kindergartner. He said that it was hard to explain to his daughter that she would go to a different school than her brother. He said that his daughter was refusing to go to school. He suggested that if the school district was worried about test scores the Board should find out where the problem is and fix it. He asked the Board to keep the schools separate.

Karina Aguilar of 1070 16th Avenue said that next year her son will be third grader and her daughter will be a kindergartner. She said that when she searched for a place to live, her family liked the Takena neighborhood. She said that the proposal was an attempt to save money, but why save money at the cost to children.

Tom Cochran of 820 4th Avenue SW in Albany said that he has no children now in either school but all five of his children attended Central and Takena Elementary Schools. He said that he is familiar with both communities. He said that the sister school proposal would be a disaster. He said that he was a teacher for 29 years with the last 26 years at South Albany High School and he taught at the university level for 13 years. He said that he understood the value of collaboration but estimated that the cost of splitting the schools would not be worth the collaboration. He said that if collaboration were necessary, he would volunteer to help teachers.

Jenny Johnson of 822 8th Avenue SW in Albany asked if the Board thought that test scores would increase with a new superintendent, the same principal over several years and increased emphasis from the parents.

Melissa Murphy of 223 7th Avenue SE in Albany said that she does not fully support or oppose the proposal. She said that she is a single parent with one child. She said that she grew up in a larger city and the schools were larger with multiple classes of the same grade and it was great. She said that her child attends Central Elementary and she loves that school. She said that Takena Elementary also seems like a great school. She said that she was willing to try something new. She said that she trusts the principal and the School Board. She said that parents were not given enough time to consider the proposal. She said that parents felt they were being rushed.

Roger Lynch of 828 Calapooia Street SW in Albany said that he is a senior at West Albany High School and does not have any children in the school system. He said that he attended elementary school in

Arkansas. He said that he attended the same school for all six years which was very helpful to him in his development as a student and as a person. He asked that the Board consider his experience when they decide how to vote.

Roger Nyquist of 2896 Firwood Place SE in Albany thanked the directors for their service. He said that he works in the area of the Central School attendance area and he had four nieces attend Tadena School. He said that several years ago when the potential for closing Tadena School came up, he heard firsthand of the fear and angst that the proposal caused. He said that the neighborhoods are completely different and the great thing about both neighborhoods is that there is a sense of community. He said that a positive culture exists at both neighborhoods. He said that one of the issues that came up for his nieces was the possibility of having to walk to Central School. He said that having children cross Elm Street was a non-starter. He said that he has a son who is a second grader and he cannot imagine having him cross Elm Street. He said that he is afraid to let his child walk to school or ride unsupervised on a school bus. He said that inexperienced drivers used Elm Street to get to high school.

He said that if he lived in the neighborhood he would worry if the change would impact his property value. He estimated that some members of the community would aggressively oppose the initiative for years to come. He said that much of what schools do is about testing and there is more to life than testing.

Clair Hoffman said that she is a fifth grader at Tadena School. She said that she asked her friends to write what they thought of the sister school proposal. She gave the student comments to the Board members.

Angelina El Khyari of 1405 Tadena Street in Albany said that her daughters Amirah and Aliyah attend Tadena Elementary School. She said that she loved school system, and loved the teachers who she thought were doing a tremendous job with a limited budget. She said that her children were reading at a higher grade level than she did at the same age.

She said that after reading the last Board packet she had some additional concerns that she wanted to bring to the Board's attention. She said that the packet included an article from the Teacher's Network. She said that the Network brought together more than 1.5 million teachers. She said that the results of the data used to conclude that collaboration was effective, was based upon 76% of the test subjects meeting in a virtual internet environment. She said that the district was not facilitating the internet as she thought the district should. She said that communication could be conducted in an internet environment and she thought that children should be taught to communicate in that environment as well.

Ms. El Khyari said that she communicates with extended family members via social media and skype and she graduated from Eastern Oregon University through online classes. She said that adequate time for teacher collaboration could be scheduled to create an atmosphere of mutual trust, entirely online. She said that horizontal collaboration occurred much more frequently but vertical collaboration happened less often but might be equally important in aiding teachers in handing off knowledge about student needs to the next teacher. She suggested that money saved by not running additional bus time could be used to facilitate collaboration.

She asked why test scores went down. She asked what the schools were doing differently now as compared to the years when grades were better. She said that she recently applied to be a volunteer at Tadena Elementary.

Board Chair Boehme invited persons who had previously addressed the Board to speak.

Nolan Streitberger of 1237 12th Avenue SW in Albany said that he spoke at the previous Board meeting. He said that he did not know any of the teachers or the principal. He said that he spoke to a number of people outside of the school but no one he spoke to understood the value of the proposal. He said that he works for HP in Corvallis and he collaborates with people throughout the country and throughout the world. He said that he works with all of those people to complete projects. He questioned the value of the sister school proposal. He said that if the children were moved to another school they would still have the same classmates and the same teachers and the same curriculum.

Richard Meaney of 823 Walnut Street in Albany distributed prepared comments. He said that he and his wife Joann studied all of the information. He said that the definition of collaboration was team work. He suggested that collaboration need not be face-to-face. He said that test scores dropped when the standards were raised. He asked if the significant disruption of students and their communities justified the potential benefits of collaboration.

Board Chair Boehme said that he wished to provide an opportunity for staff and Board Members to respond.

Superintendent Delapoer said that there was a misconception that this was about test scores. She said that there were many ways to measure student learning. She said that what educators were really looking forward to was the level and degree of student learning. She said that she wanted to provide teachers with the very best resources so that students could learn to their best potential. She said that she believed and observed at other schools that having another teacher to observe, work with, to get ideas from, to share successes and failures was a very important resource.

Central and Tadena Schools principal Lisa Shogren said that she and Board Member Sandi Gordon rode a school bus on May 4 from Tadena School to Central School to measure the travel time between the schools.

Ms. Delapoer said that a parent stated that her child had a 55 minute ride from Tadena School in the afternoon. Ms. Delapoer stated that the bus delivers children to the Boys and Girls Club first and then takes the remainder of the children home.

Assistant Superintendent Tonja Everest said that she agreed with Ms. Delapoer's comments about student learning. She said that she was cautious about reading research. She said that she did not find any specific research that addressed this circumstance. She said that when considering research it was important to examine a researcher's body of work.

Ms. Shogren spoke of the school parents PTA and PTC organizations. She said that there would be one combined organization similar to the structure for the Oak Grove and Fir Grove Schools which would plan activities together. She gave specific examples such as the Central School carnival and Tadena School movie nights.

Ms. Delapoer said that she spoke to Jim Golden, the next superintendent and said that he fully understands the benefits. She said that although Mr. Golden has not been part of the conversations but he is supportive of the concept.

She said that discussion of the sister school concept was first discussed a number of years ago when the district was considering closing Takena School. She said that the Board members made the decision then not to do that but she said that it was difficult to look people in the face and try to justify a small school if it would not be of the best quality. She said that small schools were not set up for success.

Director Bricker said that he read a number of documents but most were just position papers. He said that very little of what was written was actually research. He said that he trusts the staff. He said that he has worked with Ms. Delapoer for 15 years. He said that it would have been easy for her to push the issue to the next superintendent but he knew that Ms. Delapoer was doing the right thing for kids.

Director Gordon said that she researched information. She said that her daughter went to Clover Ridge School and then to Timber Ridge School. She said that some parents were hesitant to speak but having a choice of teachers was worthwhile. She spoke of the success of the PLC program and noted that it was initially opposed by parents. She said that the sister school program for Central and Takena Schools it was not an issue of money. She said that it was an issue student learning.

She said that she was in the same elementary school with the same cohort. She said that this proposal would expand the size of the student cohort and allow the students to move to middle school knowing a larger group of students. She asked why parents would not want what was best for student learning.

Ms. Shogren thanked the families for coming this evening. She said that it was about the children.

ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Boehme said that there would be a Board Meeting at 7:00 p.m. that evening. He asked parents who wished to speak at the Board meeting to not repeat at that meeting what was already said at the Work Session.

Board Chair Boehme adjourned the Work Session at 6:37 p.m.

Jerry Boehme, 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.