

From the Desk of
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Board of Directors
Central School District 13-J
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Colleagues:

This week several members of the public have asked me to share specific thoughts on our circumstances. Keenly aware of, though adamantly opposed to, the limits on speech from individual board members outside a quorum, I made a decision to provide a series of observations regarding our times – as an individual. Rather than sharing these views individually, I decided to put them on paper – and share all, with all – at the same time.

First, I believe little if any meaningful progress will occur until there is a formal, systemic change in leadership and personnel. This includes the superintendent, our bond specialist, supplemental legal counsel, and most if not all of the board – including me. Whatever could have, or should have been done – the existing leadership team failed to identify the growing schism in trust – we have failed to maintain the focus of the district upon the students we serve. Like the captain of a ship run aground, relief is warranted because of the absolute necessity of the crew's trust in future endeavors.

Second, I believe we have not sufficiently managed the formal complaint process because it is itself an insufficient mechanism. Part of this is due to the legalistic patterns of our time; part is because it is easier in the near-term to formalize communication in order to contain perceived discontent, because too few people have the wherewithal to continue a fight. Sadly, the far-term consequence of this choice is a gradual collection of frustrations that add up; the residual loss of confidence metastasizes into a cancer that cannot be easily treated, nor well survived. Transparency is more than a talking point, and our existing policies are not sufficient for our circumstances.

Third, I believe that the community as a whole, now, is sufficiently frustrated with the school board and the administration of the district, that there will be dramatic change; if not in weeks, than in months. While much of the criticism can be fairly understood – if not fully agreed with – structural change is warranted. However, structural change across the spectrum is indeed more involved than many might accept. Ironically, some of the people pushing hardest for dramatic change should consider a future that includes alternative interests; for the few – and I believe very few – this process has sadly, been far more than a selfless act. The critic has a place, but it rarely is at the head of the pack.

Fourth, I believe our financial circumstances are far worse than anyone involved in the fight over Hunter/Meikle-Stoops has paid attention to, or in truth wants to know. Fixing the blame on poor leadership is always easier than finding long-term solutions for structural and systemic survival. This does not defend poor leadership, but the larger perspective has been ignored: the K-12 system we used to enjoy is now impossible to provide, we must do things differently. The easy steps have been exhausted long ago.

Fifth, I believe that it is time for Central School District 13-J to merge with another district (or several), align with a municipality/county, or dissolve as a single-purpose government and hand the responsibilities to the State of Oregon. Failing to do this, we should consider radically redesigning our administrative structure as well as our delivery systems. The following recommendations are offered for future boards to consider:

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- Replacing the position of superintendent with a Chief Operating Officer responsible for management of programs, not people;
- Development and implementation of an internal administration-represented workforce council to determine equitable, fair, and legal methods of contracting out the facilities management, financial services, and human resources administrative functions of the school district through county, state, or private providers – and/or redistribution of resources allowing individual building-teams to provide these services internally;
- Development and implementation of parenting contracts requiring out-of-class education and workforce experiences associated with placement during high school;
- Development and implementation of a facilities use strategy that seeks partners for outside traditional school hour/s use;
- Restructuring the position/s of principal to be a part-time, rotating responsibility among teachers with at least five years in the classroom (at least three of which in Central School District 13-J schools);
- Discontinuation of all/any contracts with Willamette Educational Service District;
- Development and implementation of a simplified teacher aid/volunteer coordination, training, and tracking program to provide classroom instructors with additional assistance – with an emphasis on outreach among young seniors;
- Prosecution of legal remedy for violations of the 14th Amendment by the United States Department of Education, the Oregon Department of Education, and the United States Congress pursuant to inequities in education funding; and
- Development and implementation of single-term limits for the Central School District 13-J Board of Directors;

Sixth, I believe that we must embrace an emerging, evolutionary hybrid system of teaching, learning, and community childcare programming that takes advantage of the skill-sets students are showing up at school with, the changes to workforce dynamics (including when people work, and how), and available technologies; this would require classes, after-school programming, and extracurricular activities to be restructured into a variety of delivery methods including web-based courses, club rather than school-based activities, as well as targeted investments in workforce development apprenticeships and practicum opportunities.

Finally, I believe that most people currently engaged in the brushfire consuming our attentions are good people that believe they are helping children and our community. While the past several years have not been what I was hoping for, or expecting, as a board member – there are some things the district does well. It is now time for the community to find resolution so that we may move forward. Each and everyone involved will bear a price of that progress; it is now, in the calm before the storm that we must discern our purpose within the coming maelstrom, and beyond.

Sincerely,



Paul L. Evans
Citizen

Cc: Itemizer-Observer
Statesman-Journal