

EEA Statement to 4J School Board
10-2-19

Good evening members of the board and Superintendent Balderas. My name is Sabrina Gordon and I am president of the Eugene Education Association. Earlier this evening you had a work session on assessments in our district. Assessing student progress is a critical component to the practice of teaching. Educators are constantly engaging in a variety of assessments to gauge how effective their instructional plans are in helping students meet learning objectives. When they find that outcomes are not as expected, they engage in professional reflection and may decide to make adjustments or to spend more time focusing efforts on important student goals.

EEA would like to encourage the board and the district to engage in the process of assessments, too. 4J initiatives often have large impacts on the working and learning conditions in our schools. One recent initiative is the Behavior Framework, meant to respond to the increasing needs to support the behavioral health of students. A lot of planning time has gone into this initiative, and last May a behavior advisory group made up of administrators, specialists and teachers made suggestions for how to spend an additional million dollars to infuse more support into this area. How will the district engage in monitoring progress toward goals? How will you know whether plans are creating the intended outcomes, or if adjustments need to be made? Has that plan from last May been fully implemented yet? EEA is hearing from some members; for example, people are glad to have behavior EA's assigned to each elementary school but the plan for training these EA's added to the already impossible workload of a very small team of specialists. We're also hearing that some key hiring for behavior support has not happened yet. EEA encourages you to check in with teachers in a meaningful way, perhaps with a survey, and ask how things are going. They want to give feedback on what is going well and what they still need help with. They are in the best position to give you the information you need because they are living it everyday.

One other district initiative that EEA members are dying for you to ask them about is bell schedule changes last year and decision to use Friday afternoons for weekly mandated professional learning. How will the district assess the impact on students and teachers? Best practice would be to determine if the outcome is what you were hoping for or if adjustments should be made.

The members of EEA ask you to include assessments of your initiatives as a regular part of the process, just as teachers do in the classroom. Check to see whether the best laid plans are indeed moving teaching and learning in the right direction or if adjustments should be made, before calling it good and moving on to the next thing.