

## 4J Board Statement

11/6/19

Good Evening Members of the Board and Superintendent Balderas,

My name is Sabrina Gordon and I am president of the Eugene Education Association. Tonight I want to talk about the importance of educator voice in decisions that impact the students of 4J. In particular, I want to draw your attention to the difference between **hearing** educator voice and really **listening to and incorporating** educator voice into decision making. When educators take the time and work up the nerve to speak out on behalf of their students, it is for good reason and it is important that decision makers listen and find ways to act upon the information.

I'm not going to spend a lot of time on any single issue tonight, but want to highlight some current "hot topic" issues that educators are dealing with and speaking up about right now in 4J:

Tonight you heard from Kelly middle school educators whose students will be impacted by the district's plan to move Yujin Gakuen elementary into the Kelly building. They have genuine concerns about equity and the educational experience for students in both schools. Tonight you **heard** them, but please show that you're **listening** and insist that the district incorporate the concerns they voice into their plans and invite them to be part of the solutions by including them in decisions.

Another hot topic: This school year is the second year of a new schedule in 4J that requires teachers to attend meetings every Friday afternoon. These weekly meetings were added at the same time that 4J increased daily instructional minutes, which left less time for all of the important professional tasks that teachers need to do to support students (planning, grading, one-on-one support, team meetings, behavior committees, curriculum adoption committees, etc.). Friday afternoon is the worst time for teachers exhausted from the week to be trying to engage in professional learning. When teachers speak out about this, please know they are not just complaining. They are crying out for relief as professionals who recognize they are not being allowed enough time to do their jobs. District leaders have **heard** this before, but is anyone **listening**?

There are many other critical issues that educators in 4J raise on a daily basis: ongoing unmet student needs around mental health and behavioral support, enormous caseloads for special educators, lack of nurses for critical student health needs, etc. Sometimes it might seem easier to **hear** concerns and then move on, but **truly listening and incorporating educator voice** into these complicated issues is the only way 4J can improve the educational experience of students.