Portland Board of Education
Personnel Subcommittee
Minutes of Wednesday, May 14, 2025 @ 10 am

<u>Committee Members Present</u>:
Laurel Steinhauser
Dave Murphy
Sarah Spear

<u>Committee Members Absent:</u>
None

<u>Administration Present</u>:
Dr. Charles D. Britton, Superintendent of Schools
Stephanie Fragola, Assistant to the Superintendent for Business and Financial Affairs
Sara McLaughlin, Director of Student Services

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

L. Steinhauser called the meeting to order at 10 am

2. Approve Minutes of April 9, 2025

S. Spear moved to approve the minutes of April 9, 2025, seconded by D. Murphy. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED

3. Technology Department

Dr. Britton provided an overview of the history of the Technology Department and how it has evolved to the current situation. He noted that the district currently has no Director of Technology or IT Manager, and one of the two IT Technicians will be relocating out of state. This situation presents an opportunity to reevaluate and reimagine the structure and direction of the district's technology services.

Dr. Britton proposed not filling the in-house Network Administrator position, which currently costs $72,000 in salary plus benefits. Instead, he recommends entering into a managed service agreement with Advanced Office Systems (AOS) for network administration. AOS has been supporting the district for the past two years in emergency situations and is already familiar with our network infrastructure and servers. Under the proposed agreement, AOS would provide on-site support one day per week and offer 24/7 remote monitoring and response for any network emergencies. It was noted that AOS would not handle help desk responsibilities, so an in-house staff member would still be needed for day-to-day support.

There was discussion regarding the extent to which in-house staff are utilized for large-scale technology projects. Dr. Britton noted that, in practice, many major tasks had to be contracted out due to the current staff's limited capacity or comfort level with those projects. He also referenced an assessment completed by AOS, which included a detailed inventory that helped identify and prioritize technology needs across the district.

Dr. Britton then recommended hiring two Technology Support Specialists, with hourly rates based on experience. For leadership and oversight, he proposed assigning the Director of Building & Grounds responsibility for all aspects of district technology, including hardware, infrastructure, and servicing as the liaison with AOS for all network-related matters. He also recommended providing appropriate compensation to reflect that expanded leadership role.

Dr. Britton's next recommendation is to establish a Director of Teaching and Learning position. This individual would supervise and evaluate Holly Russo in her role related to PowerSchool and assume responsibility for all software-related functions across the district.

All of these recommendations fall within the approved budget and are projected to result in a total savings of approximately $25,000, even with the inclusion of the AOS contract. The AOS managed services agreement would be effective from June 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. The remaining staffing changes would take effect starting July 1, 2025.

There was a discussion regarding the IT Support Specialist positions, including their pay structure, work hours, and the fact that they would be 12-month employees.

There was discussion noting that the district originally went out to bid for services with AOS. The hope is to extend that existing agreement for the proposed managed services; however, if an extension is not permitted, the district may need to go out to bid again. Follow-up will be made with the Town Director of Finance to confirm the appropriate process. Discussion took place regarding whether Board approval is required to enter into the agreement with AOS. Follow-up will be conducted to clarify this.

4. Discussion of Two (2) FTE Special Education Teachers

Dr. Britton noted that the special education budget was reduced during the budget process. Since then, S. McLaughlin has identified a growing need within the Life Skills program, which now serves approximately 19 students supported by 10 adults (teachers and paraprofessionals). This staffing ratio does not align with industry standards. To address this, she proposed splitting the program into separate middle school and high school sections. She also reviewed the number of students who may no longer require one-to-one paraprofessional support. The Life Skills curriculum was discussed, and both Dr. Britton and S. McLaughlin outlined the developments since the original budget planning that have created this need.

Secondly, S. McLaughlin shared concerns about the projected high school resource caseloads, which are expected to increase significantly due to a larger incoming 9th-grade cohort. Caseloads are projected to reach 25 to 27 students per teacher, well above industry standards. She recommended restoring the resource position that was eliminated during the initial budget cuts. Additionally, she noted that a student who had been outplaced has moved out of Portland, resulting in approximately $100k in savings. She also reviewed the recent reductions to paraprofessional staffing.

S. Fragola provided an update on the funding impact of the additional positions and the removal of the outplaced student. Even with the inclusion of these new positions, the district is still projected to realize a savings of approximately $60k-$148k.

5. Discussion of One (1) FTE Kindergarten Teacher TBD

Current enrollment for 25-26 stands at 79 students, excluding Open Choice seats. This compares to 84 students at the same time last year. Therefore, no action is required at this time.

6. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:18 am