

October 1, 2021

Dear Banks School District Parents and Community,

The past 18 months have been a very challenging time for all of us. There are many decisions that have been made and while we don't always agree, we can agree on that we want our students in school and safe. Recently, there has been conversations and public comment in our board meetings in regards to how we conduct our board meetings, how we communicate with the public, how we set our curriculum, and why we follow state mandates. This letter is being written to address those issues, questions, and concerns that people might have.

Response to a Recent Petition Presented at the September Board Meeting

Here is the petition as presented to the Banks School Board and the Superintendent:

Text of the petition:

Local representation of the community in the decision-making process for issues that affect Banks' children is an essential part of democracy. This is only feasible through a healthy conversation between the community and decision makers.

Before the October 2021 school board meeting, the Banks community requests the board and district superintendent make the following changes to the way the board and superintendent engage with the community:

1. Establish a town hall open forum to be held the hour prior to every regularly scheduled school board meeting. The purpose of this forum would be to allow community members, on all sides of an issue, to have the opportunity to engage in respectful discussions and give the school board insight into the community's position on important issues.
2. Establish a standard method for gathering community feedback on issues of concern, similar to previous ad hoc efforts involving online surveys. Solicit feedback from the community when requested by a to-be-determined number of Banks community members.
3. Be 100% transparent in sharing the results of those surveys. Community members are to have access to anonymous survey results, and data is to be presented to the public.
4. Commit to responding in writing to every question posed to the school board and superintendent at a school board meeting. This could take the form of a monthly Q&A publication, for example.

-----End of the petition-----

We would like to address each part of the petition.

#1 – A School District Board cannot deliberate about random items, personnel, or potential action items as this would be a violation of public meeting laws. Also, if you were to have a “town hall” with the board present, this would be a quorum of the board and meeting notices would be posted along with a set agenda. All of the requirements of public meetings laws would apply and do apply whenever a quorum of the board is present. Public comment prior to a board meeting is designed to give the public a voice for comments on district business. We will plan to continue public comment in the future. Public comment is not required at school board meetings, however, we do feel it is vital at this time to continue to accept public comment at our meetings whether they are virtual or in-person. Also, please continue to communicate information about the district to the superintendent’s email, jeffl@banks.k12.or.us.

#2 and #3 – We have done multiple surveys as a district and also at the individual schools. We did multiple surveys over the past 18 months to gather feedback. We use surveys to guide decisions on different educational topics. We also use surveys to gather information for our grants like our Student Investment Account and others. However, we will not survey the community on mandates that are required by the state. Regardless of the results, we will have to follow state mandates. If we do surveys and the information is determined to be important to share with the community, then we will share that information.

#4 – Part of public comment at a board meeting is that after the meeting, the chair, vice chair, and the superintendent will meet to determine the level of response to the comment. It could be anywhere from no response to a public response to the entire district. After the meeting, it will be determined how we communicate responses to public comment. We will also be creating a newsletter type page for the board on the website. This will be updated as new information needs to be shared by the board.

Critical Race Theory and Critical Race Theory Curriculum

It has been asked multiple times over the past four months whether or not we teach Critical Race Theory curriculum in our schools. The answer is no. We do not teach Critical Race Theory in our K-12 schools. Critical Race Theory is a concept that grew from Critical Legal Studies close to 40 years ago as a tool that could be used to examine and explain racial disparities in our society. It is not a curriculum. It is not a belief system. It is a framework for understanding the systems of racial injustice in our world. Numerous theoretical frameworks including CRT are used in graduate level, University work.

The Banks School District follows board policy to create a neutral environment so students can voice opinions in a professional setting whether students agree or disagree on different topics. Topics that may include civil rights, African-American authors, racism, and equity, to name a few. It is vital for all of us in America to examine and have an open and honest dialogue about racism and its impacts. We teach factual history and use the Oregon State Standards for

Social Studies. If you would like to view the Social Studies Standards for Oregon or view your child's social studies textbook or class syllabus, please contact your child's school or click on this link for the standards. [ODE Social Studies Standards](#).

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Board of Directors and the Superintendent,

Sincerely,
Ron Frame
Board Chair