

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

September 21, 2006

7:00 p.m.

Montessori Magnet School

PRESENT: Edward Brown, President
Teneka Frost, Vice President
Barbara Gaffuri, Secretary
William Barnette
Jackie Jenkins-Cox
Judy Doeschate
Susan Kushner (Arrived at 7:45 p.m.)

Dr. Eva Joseph
Terrance White
Joseph Dragone
Kathleen Wetmore
Linda Jackson-Chalmers

Absent: None

Call to Order:

Mr. Brown called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Brown welcomed the members of the audience and thanked them for taking the time to attend the meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Joseph noted this evening, prior to the board meeting, the district held a reception, recognizing newly tenured teachers. Dr. Joseph advised this is a real validation of their capacity as successful teachers.

Dr. Joseph advised today, the Commissioner of Education held a press conference wherein he released for the first time the grades 3 through 8 assessment results. Dr. Joseph advised these do not represent school report card or accountability data. Meaning that information that was released today for English, Language, Arts for grades 3 through 8 did not factor in some of the elements that we consider; continuously enrolled students, students who have English as a second language or the alternative assessments for students with disabilities. Dr. Joseph noted this is really a first blush at the results and while we maybe able to make some generalized comparisons, in terms of the district's actual accountability, meeting benchmarks, meeting annual yearly progress, that information is not available at this time. Dr. Joseph advised the district would be continuing to see the process through in anticipation of receiving those results.

Dr. Joseph advised the New York State Association for Small City Schools would be holding a press conference on September 27th at 11:00 a.m. in four sites across the state, Albany, Newburgh, Jamestown and Niagara Falls. The purpose of the press conference will be to highlight the suit that the Small City Schools is representing the Albany District with respect to the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and insuring that the interests of all high need, urban districts are well represented in terms of financial funding and aid in consideration of the needs of urban districts. The press conference will take place at the Legislative Office Building.

Dr. Joseph advised she has been asked to speak on behalf of the Albany Schools and Mr. Brown will also be representing the School District as well. Dr. Joseph advised they would be joined by a number of local districts, including Cohoes, Glens Falls and a number of other districts in the area, that are also part of the litigation.

Dr. Joseph thanked the board members for their full day of attendance and time commitment this past Saturday in what was a very productive workshop in beginning to move the district forward in making the decisions necessary with respect to not just the final phases of the first part of the facilities improvement, but looking toward the second phase and all that that will bring with it.

INTRODUCTION OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. Joseph introduced Lashawnda Jones, the 2006-2007 Student Representative to the Board of Education. Dr. Joseph noted Lashawnda is a senior at Albany High School and she is part of the Student Government at Albany High School. Dr. Joseph welcomed Lashawnda. Mr. Brown also welcomed Lashawnda and noted that her prospective as a student representative on the board is very important to the board. The board looks forward to working with Lashawnda during this school year.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no speakers.

FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT

Dr. Joseph noted the workshop held on September 16th was a full day of conversation. Dr. Joseph advised Mr. Gifford would be presenting an encapsulation of the main points that were discussed to start to engage the community present in understanding the kind of conversations that the district is having. Dr. Joseph noted this is the first step in generating the next steps for the important decisions that need to be made with respect to the district's facilities plan. Mr. Gifford reviewed the planning parameters including enrollment, neighborhood schools, grade configuration, school size, class size and program; prioritizes such as school safety, capacity, building condition, educational adequacy. Mr. Gifford continued with comprehensive information related to enrollment, the Arbor Hill Elementary School, other elementary schools (Giffen and Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology), the middle school plan, the high school restructuring plan and the athletic master plan. Mr. Gifford also presented a matrix in assist in evaluating the status of the athletic master plan versus the Bleeker Stadium proposal.

Dr. Joseph noted in the athletic master plan, the district had the plan completed absent Bleeker Stadium. Once the master plan was developed with a stadium on the district's own campus, the possibility of contributing to the restoration of Bleeker Stadium was presented to the district.

Dr. Joseph noted the district felt that the best way to make a decision, in consideration of the district's own athletic master plan and the district having its own stadium, or using Bleeker, the district developed a decision matrix that will assist the district in being objective in ascertaining which would serve the students and community better, continuing with the master plan absent pr incorporating Bleeker Stadium. Dr. Joseph noted the district is in the process of completing the matrix to have information for the board to consider, with financial information, so that the best decision can be made.

Dr. Joseph advised the presentation was a summary of what was discussed at the workshop compiled from notes and conversation. The next steps would be to take each of the components and develop a work plan and continue to come back to the board with information. Dr. Joseph noted these decisions are all very important and while there was considerable discussion on the 16th, it did not bring the group to a place of making final decisions. Dr. Joseph also noted the group also received information about what it means to go to referendum and the timing necessary on each component. Dr. Joseph advised the district would be taking each of the summary components and through a work plan, would be coming back to the board with information upon which the board can then make decisions. Dr. Joseph advised future board meetings would be structured to include the kind of conversation and discussions that will be necessary in order for the board to make confident decisions.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Board of Education Mission, Vision & Values

Mr. Brown presented two versions of the Board's Mission, Vision and Values statement for board consideration. Mr. Brown advised the first version was developed with consensus by the board during a board workshop on July 27, 2006. Following that session, Mr. Brown advised he reviewed the document with a member of the NYSSBA Leadership Team, which resulted in several changes that are indicated by bold italic print in the second version dated August 23, 2006. The document reads as follows:

Albany City School Board of Education

Mission:

Create an environment of, high expectations, high performance, and constant improvement yielding excellent results. Excellent results yield a 100% graduation rate and the elimination of the achievement gap.

Vision:

The Albany City School Board is a conduit for public access to the city's school district. Every family wants their children to attend Albany schools where educational success is the number one priority. Success for all starts with one student at a time.

Values:

Accountability	Innovation
Care and Concern	Integrity
Choice	Opportunity
Communication	Parental/Guardian Involvement
Community Involvement	Satisfied Parents
Excellence in teaching	Successful Students
Excellence in student outcomes	Raising the bar for everyone
Honesty	Respect

The second version dated August 23, 2006 changes the wording under Mission as follows: To create an environment of excellence, high expectations, high performance, and constant improvement for students, teachers and the community that yields a 100% graduation rate and the elimination of the achievement gap. Also, the second sentence under Vision is changed to read, every family sends their children to Albany Schools... rather than every family wants to send their children to Albany schools...

Following a lengthy discussion, Mr. Brown advised the mission statements would be presented with suggestions made this evening at the next meeting for action. A suggestion was also made to put the document on the website.

Achievement Gap Resolution

Mr. Brown presented a resolution on Achievement Gap for board consideration.

Achievement Gap Resolution

In keeping with the desire of the Board of Education for constant improvement and the achievement of 100% 4-year high school graduation rates for all students, the Board of Education commits the Albany City School District to the strategic goal of completely eliminating the achievement gap in 4-year high school graduation rates between all student ethnic groups, no later than the end of this decade. In directing the district's resources to achieve this goal, the superintendent will use the most current data as a baseline, and by January 2007 develop specific progressive benchmark objectives by ethnic group for the 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-2010 academic years. Progress will be assessed and publicly reported at the end of each academic year with benchmarks and fiscal resources adjusted annually to ensure that the goal is fully achieved by the end of the 2009-10 academic year.

Discussion followed relative to the language in the document and the fact that this item in isolation does not address other goals of the district. Mention was also made that this document does not address the lower grades and whether or not there was consultation with staff in defining the date certain information. Following additional discussion, Mr. Brown advised this resolution would be placed on the next agenda for action.

Policy Review

Dr. Joseph presented four policies for board review. Dr. Joseph noted the district continues review of the Policy Manual. Mrs. Linda Jackson-Chalmers, the administrator of the Policy Committee. Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers advised the first policy, 1000 – Community Relations Goals has previously been reviewed by the board, resulting in additional comments suggested by Ms. Frost. Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers advised the remaining policies are policies that the district is required to have.

1000 – Community Relations Goals

Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers advised this policy was previously brought before the board, which resulted in changes. The policy talks about open lines communication and how this will help to reinforce and reflect the goals and objectives of the district and to provide a more informed community. The policy sets forward some specific ways that this communication would flourish along with language related to community involvement. Ms. Jackson-Chalmers advised that the Policy Committee conducted further review prior to presentation for board approval. Following a brief discussion, Mr. Brown advised the policy would be placed on the next agenda for action.

1925 – Interpreters for Hearing Impaired Parents

Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers advised this policy is a required policy that speaks to the district having responsibility for providing an interpreter for hearing impaired parents for school initiatives for academic and disciplinary matters. The policy outlines those particular settings where an interpreter is required. The second paragraph talks about the timeframe when a parent requests an interpreter. Ms. Jackson-Chalmers advised in speaking with school officials, the recommendation is 10 working days. Discussion followed relative to the timeframe, which resulted in the time being confirmed at 10 working days. Mr. Brown advised the policy would be placed on the next agenda for action.

2160 – School District Officer and Employee Code of Ethics

Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers advised this is a required policy. Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers noted this is the NYSSBA revision reflective of the district's current code of ethics policy (2050), which is listed in the Employee Handbook. Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers noted the recommendation from counsel is to include a definition of the term "interest", which is in the current policy. Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers noted the current policy reads as follows: "Interest" means direct or indirect pecuniary or material benefit accruing to an officer or employee as the result of a contract or agreement with the School District. For purposes of this policy a municipal officer or employee shall be deemed to have an interest in the contract of (1) his spouse, minor children and dependents except a contract of employment with the School District; (2) a firm partnership or association of which such officer or employee is a member or employee; (3) a corporation of which such officer or employee is an officer, director or employee, and (4) a corporation, any stock of which is owned or controlled directly or indirectly by such officer or employee. Following discussion, Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers recommended that the definition of officer, presently defined in the current policy, be included in the revision as well. Mr. Brown advised the policy, with revisions, would be placed on the next agenda for action.

2270 – School Attorney

Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers noted this is a required policy, which requires the school district must have legal counsel and that that counsel will be reappointed at the annual reorganization meeting of the board. The policy also states the process of retaining a school attorney when counsel is not an employee of the district. Discussion followed relative to who is permitted to contact counsel, the board agreed that this policy would be brought back to the Policy Committee for additional consideration.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

No reports.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Mrs. Gaffuri advised the Winter Concert at Myers Middle School is in conflict with the December Roundtable Meeting. Ms. Cutting advised the concert is being rescheduled to accommodate the board meeting. The date change will be made public when it is confirmed.

Mr. Barnette requested that when the board has items for discussion, transparencies could be made to allow the members of the audience to be able to view the documents. Dr. Joseph advised this is possible.

Ms. Frost noted the board officers and the superintendent have had some discussion related to solicitation from board members regarding topics they would like to be brought forward on future agendas for the upcoming year. Dr. Joseph advised she would send information to board members regarding this issue.

Adjournment

Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Catherine L. Cutting
Clerk of the Board