

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
December 20, 2007
7:00 p.m.

North Albany Academy

PRESENT: Teneka Frost, President
William Barnette, Vice President
Dr. Joseph Dragone
Dr. Mark Barth
Judy Doesschate
Barbara Gaffuri
Jackie Jenkins-Cox (left at 8:30 p.m.)

Dr. Eva. Joseph
Wayne Morris, Secretary
James Matthews
Linda Jackson-Chalmers

ABSENT: None

Call to Order:

Ms. Frost called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. Following the reading of the Mission Statement, all present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance. Ms. Frost extended best wishes to Ms. Jackie Jenkins-Cox who is leaving the board. Ms. Jenkins-Cox was presented a plaque in recognition of her contribution to the district at a reception preceding the meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- The superintendent introduced Mr. James Matthews, Interim Assistant Superintendent for Business Affairs, who will be with the district through the budget development process.
- The *Times Union* was at Albany High to interview the members of the Girls Varsity Basketball Team. The Lady Falcons are off to a 7-0 start. A feature story will be published in the sports section of the *Times Union*. This is the best start that coach Leslie Bogucki has had in 22 years.
- Schools will be closed December 24, 2007 through January 2, 2008. Dr. Joseph extended best wished to all for the holidays.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Nolene Smith addressed the board regarding the Strategic Plan and the offensive comments made by a member of the Board of Education relative to various groups in the community.

Ms. Frost advised that normally the Board of Education does not respond to public comment. However, this issue has been discussed by the Board of Education and recommendations have been made. Ms. Frost noted the comments have been taken very seriously. There was a letter sent out from the President of the Board, on behalf of the Board that spoke to the fact that these comments were made by one individual. They are not representative of any other members of the Board. The Board is committed to the Strategic Planning process. Ms. Frost advised the Board would be working very hard to alleviate the damage.

2. Natisha Alexander addressed the board regarding the comments of the board member.
3. Debora Brown-Johnson addressed the board regarding the Strategic Plan.

Dr. Joseph commented that the work that went on from last January, when the district began to formulate the Strategic Planning Process until the first three day of the process, was without exception, transparent. The process was developed through consensus and open dialogue so that the mistrust could be abandoned and the groups could work together for the greater good of the students. Dr. Joseph stated that one of her greatest concerns is that the email would be misconstrued as the kind of dialogue that is welcome or exists. Dr. Joseph stated that in conversations, input or emails this is not typical. Those comments would not be welcome in response to the strategic planning process. All of her efforts have been to safeguard it so that we could finally start to put some of the issues and obstacles could be put aside as the process moves forward.

INFORMATION ITEM

Special Education Presentation

Dr. Joseph advised the State Education Department has conducted a quality assurance review of the district's special education program. They provided feedback highlighting a number of issues where the district needs to do some work, in order to be in compliance. Dr. Joseph advised that from the time the review was conducted and the formal report was received, Ms. Sharpe-DeFries and her staff and school principals continued to address the issues, a number of which have been resolved. Another requirement is that this report is discussed with the Board of Education.

Ms. Deborah Sharpe-DeFries, Director of Special Education, gave a presentation on that review. A focus review team was identified and in collaboration with staff from VESID and SETRC throughout the 2006-2007 school year a Quality Improvement Process – Strategies to Improve Outcomes for Students with Disabilities was developed. Out of 76 compliance issues that could have been cited, the review identified 7 areas that revolved around IEP development and transition services. Professional development has been increased in the area of IEP writing. The district will also be looking at IEP to identify those that need to be rewritten. In transitioning, the transition coordinator will only be doing transition planning, working with middle school and high school teachers on how to put transition planning into the student's IEPs. This position has previously taken on teaching assignments. At the time the final report was written in November, these issues were already being addressed. This plan will have a mid-year report that will be presented in January. The final report will be completed in June.

- Information regarding the Wilson Program. Wilson Reading is a multi-sensory reading program for students that are significantly delayed in reading. Teachers receive a three-day training in the summer and imbedded work with teachers throughout the year. It helps students fill in gaps they have missed in earlier grades. The program is for 4th grade and up.
- What is co-teaching? Co-teaching is two teachers working together.

- Introducing another variable in our comprehensive approach in helping these students reach higher performance. How do we measure what impact the introduction of this variable as opposed to one previously implemented. We are currently measuring a cohort of 12 students with disabilities, comparing them with students that do not have the imbedded support of the consultant from the College of St. Rose. The district is looking at data from the cohort of students that have the support and the co-teacher training as opposed to the teachers who have not had the training to determine whether or not all teachers should be trained.
- What determines the level of confidence in these strategies? Teacher enthusiasm and interest in the program.
- What levels are presently receiving support services? The Wilson program goes from elementary through high school.

ROUTING CONSENT ITEM

Ms. Frost presented the Routine Consent Items (Disposal of Obsolete Equipment Bid Award and Resolution – School District Compensation over Twelve Months - IRS 409A) for approval. Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion for approval. Ms. Jenkins-Cox seconded the motion.

The board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Budget Goals

Ms. Frost presented 2008-2009 Budget Goals as part of the budget development process. Dr. Joseph advised this is the start of the budget development process. These goals guide and align with where we are as a district and will guide planning as the district thinks about resources. The goals are very much an iteration of the goals identified for 2007-2008, since although we have realized gains across the district. They still remain to be fully accomplished. Once the NYS assessment results are released, I will be reviewing specific performance information in relation to our measurable objectives with which to set our benchmarks for next year. Information relative to gains and areas where the district did not accomplish anticipated gains will be presented at the January round table meeting. Dr. Joseph reviewed each individual goal.

- Would like to know where the district is in reaching these goals, identified by schools. How are we targeting resources for schools that are not meeting standards? The board will be provided graphs and charts defining benchmarks.
- Provide the board with information about programs that are successful and these that are not. Identify where help is needed.
- Would like to see goals that reflect progress made. An indication of what the district has done, focus on where money is needed.
- On #5 where does the budget impact come from? Some of the costs the district assumes are transportation costs for students in swing space. There are some cost implications related to the phasing in, moving Hackett back and School 19 back.
- Would like to see the number of students who have gone to charter schools and are now returning to the Albany schools.

Dr. Joseph advised comparative data would be forthcoming. Goals will be more specific to each school and more information related to progress and focus in spending dollars to reach these goals. Information will be brought forward to the board at the January round table meeting.

ACTION ITEM

Strategic Plan

Ms. Frost presented the Strategic Direction for action. Mr. Barnette made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. Dr. Joseph noted there is no further discussion relative to the Strategic Direction. However, information relative to continuing the process, SoarPoint Associates have submitted a proposal for the next phase. Feedback from the last board meeting has been shared with Marilyn Gounaris and Rocco Rainone. They have provided a proposal to move forward in the process with the district for Action Team Planning. Dr. Joseph noted she had a sense that the board is comfortable with moving forward with the process for facilitation that they had recommended. That will be presented to the board for discussion and possible action at the January 2nd meeting so the process can continue with the consultants providing direction to begin facilitating the action teams. In review Dr. Joseph advised the action team co-leaders would complete two-days of training and then bringing all of the action teams together for an orientation. Dr. Joseph also noted that the consultant have advised that the better the co-leaders are trained the amount of on-site time consultants are needed would be reduced, as would the costs associated with the process. The contract with a description of services will be provided at the next meeting.

Dr. Joseph advised an email was sent to the members of the Strategic Planning Team to indicate their interest in serving as a co-leader on the action teams or as part of an action team. Response has been slow in coming in. A second invitation will be sent to the members of the Strategic Planning Team to determine their interest. Based upon feedback, each action team would have two co-leaders. One was recommended to come from the district staff and the other from the Strategic Planning Team, who is familiar with the three-day process that the district worked through. Cabinet has met and has designated who they felt is the strongest co-leader from internally. Also, trying to balance the district resources for each of the 7 strategies. Additional administrators need to be contacted. If there is no sufficient response Dr. Joseph will do personal outreach, particularly for some of the teammates who were exceptionally interested in one strategy over another.

- What are the expenditures associated with the next phase of the consultant's contract? Also, if there is not sufficient interest, perhaps the district could take the approach to publicly reach out across the community. The cost is approximately \$30,000 including on-site technical assistance days. The action teams need to fit the guidelines recommended by the consultants.
- Do as much outreach as possible. The co-leaders should have input in terms of membership to the action teams. Membership is recommended to be 5-7 people per team.

The board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the motion.

Motion passed

Policies

Ms. Frost presented the following policies for approval:

Policy #9710 Travel & Conference

Policy #6671 Extra Classroom Activities Accounting

Ms. Doesschate made a motion to approve both policies. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

- How did we arrive at the \$60/day amount and who uses this figure? As a result of discussions at the Policy Committee Meeting, Mr. Schreuers took the discussion into consideration and based on his best estimate these figured were established for all areas.
- Discussion continued relative to the \$60/day figure, based on the location of the travel. Safeguards are in place through a conference request form that is reviewed prior to being approved. Mr. Matthews noted the district is obligated to pay on receipted amounts only as required by the Controller's Office for school districts. The amount indicated on the policy is a maximum amount.

The board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Morris advised the Facilities Committee met earlier this week. A committee is being defined to hear the concerns of the Myers Middle School neighborhood group. Information will be forwarded to the board when the meeting takes place.

Ms. Frost also noted the Facilities Committee discussed the listing of board members on the building plaques for the new and renovated schools, based on a request sent to the board. The recommendation from the committee is that the plaques will reflect the board members seated at the time the building is dedicated. This has been past practice. The recommendation further states that board member titles will not be indicated on the plaques. Names will be listed in alphabetical order. Going forward the plaques will follow these guidelines. Plaques will be changed to reflect these guidelines. Discussion followed regarding the identification of officers on the plaques. Dr. Joseph clarified that previous plaques only included the identification of the President of the Board. The Montessori plaque included all the officers, which is why this plaque will be changed. The board agreed that the board should be listed alphabetically as recommended by the committee.

Dr. Barth advised the members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Voting Locations met and reviewed data, looked at voting trends and reached out to the Common Council to present our analysis by wards, comparing voter turnout May votes with November General Elections votes over several years. School districts for the May were identified on a color-coded map. Kathy Wolverton was also a member of this group. This information was presented to the Common Caucus with a request that ward leaders indicate problem areas in their areas. A follow-up letter was sent to the members soliciting their suggestions to reduce the inconveniences to the public. The goal is not to increase the number of voting sites, but to redefine the district to make voting more convenient for the public, yielding a greater turnout for the school votes.

Mrs. Gaffuri noted the Audit Committee met this past week. Two guests attended the meeting. Mr. Verrigni, Director of Transportation for the district and Mr. Manila, who is the Assistant Director from New York State Public School Transportation. Discussion centered around the issue of the use of seat belts on school buses. Presently there is no requirement that student must use seat belts. . School buses are designed to provide a protective “cage” where children sit, which are very safe. The regulations were reviewed and they will be deferred to counsel for review for possible recommendations. There is proposed legislation at the National level looking at shoulder strap seat belts A report on the legislation will be forthcoming as well as recommendations through counsel.

Ms. Frost advised the organizational meeting agenda on January 2, 2008 would include committee membership and school liaison listings for 2007-2008. Dr. Joseph advised these would be sent to board members with the agenda prior to the meeting. Ms. Frost asked that members of the board review the listings in order to be prepared to discuss membership at the board meeting.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Ms. Doesschate advised she is resigning from the position of representative on the Capital Area Small City Schools District Association.

Mrs. Gaffuri noted there has been an issue of no crossing guard at the Myers Middle School crossing. There is no traffic light on that corner and it has been a safety issue for children trying to cross the street to get to the school. While this is the responsibility of the City, Dr. Joseph advised she would share these concerns with Joseph Verrigni, who has regular contact with traffic safety for the City.

Mr. Barnette requested follow-up related to the dress code issues and recommendation from the City Council PTA for elementary and middle school students. Ms. Jackson-Chalmers advised the recommendation from the Policy Committee is to convene the original committee and start the review of the Code of Conduct, which should be started in the near future as part of the required annual review. Recommendations will be forwarded to the board by the spring. Following discussion that included concern that these recommendations should be reviewed separately from the full review of the policy, Dr. Joseph advised she would be regrouping with Ms. Jackson-Chalmers on this issue.

Adjournment

Mr. Morris made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine L. Cutting
Clerk of the Board