



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
February 12, 2009  
7:00 p.m.**

**Eagle Point Elementary School**

**PRESENT:** Barbara Gaffuri, President  
Melissa Mackey, Vice President  
Judy Doesschate, Secretary  
Dr. Mark Barth  
Rose Brandon  
Daniel Egan  
Wayne Morris

Dr. Eva Joseph  
Dr. Tresa Diggs  
Bill Hogan  
Linda Jackson-Chalmers  
Linda Rudnick

**ABSENT:** None

**Call to Order:**

- Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Members of the audience were welcomed and thanked for taking the time to attend the meeting.
- The Mission Statement was read.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

- The celebration of the inauguration of Barack Obama as President was a wonderful event. The program featured student essay contest winners, musical and dance performances, an art show and a historical slideshow and local guest speakers.

**OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Bill Davis addressed the board regarding the 2009-2010 school calendar, requesting that the board consider increasing the number of parent/teacher conferences.
2. Ashley Hooks addressed the board inviting board members and the public to participate in a rally protesting the proposed \$2.5 million cut in education in the Governor's budget. A rally is planned on March 5, 2009 at 4:30 p.m. on the State Capitol Steps (East Side).
3. Robert Malerba addressed the board relative to a recent show at the Capitol Rep called "No Child", an educational study. Mr. Malerba also talked about engaging the community in task forces to address upcoming issues in the District.

**ROUTINE CONSENT**

Ms. Mackey made a motion to approve the routine consent item, Resolution to conduct Public Hearing for the Kipp Tech Valley Charter School. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

### **INFORMATION ITEM**

#### **Pre-kindergarten Program**

Mrs. Rudnick gave a very comprehensive presentation on the District's Pre-kindergarten Program, reviewing enrollment trends, program growth, associated costs, supporting fund streams, types of programs, opportunities and options (maintaining, expanding and reducing) and recruitment efforts. Over a seven-year span the numbers have increased 78% from 350 students to 622. Cost analysis indicates that agency run program costs are approximately \$50,000 less than District programs. The District currently pays tuition assistance to two off-site programs, the Jewish Community Center and Toyland Day Nursery. The Pre-K funding forecast for 2009-10 remains stable at the 2008-2009 allocation. In order for the District to maintain the current Pre-K programs with no additional expansion would cost an additional \$203,000. To expand by one program at ASH options are \$128,000 for a district program, \$78,000 for an agency program or zero dollar increase to move an existing District program from Giffen Elementary for the 2009-2010 school year. Ms. Rudnick advised that despite the maintenance of effort clause, which requires that the District maintain the number of students reported in year previous to application for funding, any tuition assistance program could be eliminated from an LEA's responsibility. If the District were to remove the tuition assistance from these programs the District savings would amount to \$90,000. The District continues to reach out to parents to enroll their children in the District's Pre-K program.

- It's stated that the general fund currently allocates \$585,877 to this program, yet you indicate that the District will need \$203,000 from the general fund in order to continue. This year the cost of the program is \$3,810,892. In order to be able to sustain that figure the program would need an additional \$203,00 with the current funding streams.
- What percentage of these students stay in the District and go into kindergarten. There are lower numbers of students in the kindergarten program than the Pre-K program. The District is looking at creative ways to increase those Pre-K numbers moving into the continuum of learning. Current figures are 68%. The goal is to have 100% retention.
- Do we have data on children who did not attend Pre-K, some way of knowing a population that goes underserved? This would be an effort well worth pursuing. That's actually part of the grant through NYSUT, through APSTA's efforts.
- Between Pre-kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade we get a clear sense of actually how many students are not coming into the District's Pre-K's and entering 1<sup>st</sup> grade. I would like to know how many of the children in the District are not attending any Pre-K. What have we done to look at the curriculum that we are serving with Pre-K? We have to change some of what we are doing in our classrooms in order to close the achievement gap.

### **ACTION ITEM**

#### **Middle School Enrollment Plan**

Mr. Morris made a motion to approve the feeder schools as part of the adopted feeder plan for middle school enrollment. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. Dr. Joseph advised the Board adopted the feeder plan for middle school enrollment on February 3, 2009. The decision this evening in relation to the plan is specifically which schools comprise the feeder school for Myers and Hackett. The criteria comprised by the Enrollment Committee, the schools will be equally balanced (size, academics, social-economic status and ethnicity).

The feeder plan is identified as follows:

**Hackett Middle School**

Arbor Hill elementary School  
Delaware Community School  
Eagle Point Elementary School  
New Scotland Elementary School  
Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science  
& Technology  
(Philip Livingston Magnet Academy)

**Myers Middle School**

Albany School of Humanities  
Giffen Memorial Elementary School  
Montessori Magnet School  
Pine Hills Elementary School  
Sheridan Preparatory Academy  
Schuyler Achievement Academy  
(Philip Livingston Magnet Academy)

Albany School of Humanities and Giffen Memorial in 2009-2010 will not feed 6<sup>th</sup> graders. But, rather 6<sup>th</sup> graders into 7<sup>th</sup> grade only. The one adjustment that was made on review and trying to achieve the balances stated early, Schuyler Achievement Academy had originally been assigned to Hackett, but it has been shifted to Myers. This is the one change that was made from the feeder list provided at the last meeting. The board heard additional enrollment information and enrollment projections based on the recommended feeder plan through 2011-2012. Significant considerations are that there is no way to effectively predict resulting impact on enrollment from charter schools on a particular Albany School. Models assume charter school enrollment continuing at current levels. If not, Albany Schools must consider other options (safety valves) to grow its seating capacity for grades 6-8 in coming years. Contingency plans should there be overcrowding include retaining some grade 6 classes in their home elementary schools; create another K-8 school (strategic plan); possible alternate locations for some special education classes. Next steps would be to review and verify actual enrollment for 2009-2010 in Fall 2009 and adjust projections; review elementary, middle configurations for future years based on real-time enrollment and to continue strategic planning of other K-8 schools and other grade level configurations or school use. In summary the Board of Education adopted the Feeder Schools Plan and Neighborhood Preference Component on February 3, 2009. The remaining decision is the feeder schools for Hackett and Myers.

- Was the 6<sup>th</sup> grade removed from TOAST because of the elevator space and handicapped accessibility? The 6<sup>th</sup> grade was moved because it was part of the original educational configuration. Every elementary school was to be a kindergarten – grade 5 school. When TOAST opens this fall it will have been reconfigured with classroom space available for Pre-k through grade 5. There won't be extra classrooms for grade 6. The sections for other grade levels would have to be reduced to make accommodations for 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes.
- In order to keep on top of this we need a data report each year. Numbers will change as time changes. That is why we indicated that come fall when we have real children in real seats, we have to review and verify their actual enrollment and look at what the trends is and carry that forward.
- If we adopt this configuration this evening are we moving forward saying that the 6<sup>th</sup> grades will go forward into the middle schools? My proposal is that the District move forward with adopting this feeder system, leaving open the question as to which one of those four schools that have the potential to retain 6<sup>th</sup> grades next year, would be considered.

- What kind of class sizes are we talking about, based on the numbers presented? We have projected two teams for grade levels. We had always projected class sizes somewhere between 20 and 25 students.
- If the District discovers in September that there is overcrowding, is there a plan to remedy that situation? There are four schools that are not at capacity. Because of their enrollment, they would be able to keep a 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The District is expecting to get a better sense of numbers before the end of this school year, with appropriate changes made at that time in cooperation with the school communities as much as possible.

Dr. Diggs advised the numbers were run based upon the January 30<sup>th</sup> enrollment in grades 5, 6, 7 and 8. These are numbers without the special education classes, the self-contained classes, these numbers were presented to the middle school principals to determine if they could accommodate these students and how they would go about accommodating. For the Hackett feeder pattern, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade for the next school year was 225. Those students would be accommodated on two teams with each team approximately 112. The 7<sup>th</sup> graders at Hackett would be 197, also with two teams, 8<sup>th</sup> graders 195 students, with two teams. For Myers Middle School the two teams, total of 198 students, 7<sup>th</sup> graders 220, approximately 110 per team and 8<sup>th</sup> grade 219, approximately 210 per team. They are aware that there would be self-contained special education classes in each building and they would be able to accommodate those students. These are real numbers. We will continue to look at the gradation reports monthly to keep track of how these numbers are changing.

Ms. Doesschate made a motion to amend the motion so that the Board is provided with updated data and any contingent plans by the April 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, with follow-up review of the feeder system annually. Ms. Mackey seconded the friendly amendment.

Mr. Egan expressed concern that the issue is being clouded, and requested that the two issues be separated, the vote on the feeder plan and a separate vote on the data and revisiting. Mr. Egan expressed concern that people would leave this meeting not knowing what is going to happen years from now. The point of a feeder plan is to know long-term what is happening.

Mrs. Gaffuri called for a vote on the original motion.

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

Motion passed.

Ms. Doesschate made a motion that the superintendent report to the board by the April 7<sup>th</sup> meeting at the very latest with regard to the contingency plans for the board to consider voting on with regard to potential excess enrollment for next year. Also, that the board would then receive annual reports. Mr. Egan seconded the motion. Following discussion Dr. Joseph advised an update would be provided at the April 7<sup>th</sup> board meeting. The four schools under-enrolled, based on their capacity where the District is looking at places where there is ample space are Eagle Point Elementary School, Pine Hills Elementary School, Sheridan Preparatory Academy and Arbor Hill Elementary School.

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

Motion passed.

- Miya Battista commented that the board could have simply agreed to a commitment not enrolling either middle school over 650 students, which would have accommodated the concerns expressed. Hearing the comments on the projections based on 75% enrollment in Charter Schools. I would like to have seen a little bit more of a possibility of lobbying efforts and persuasive efforts to have Albany City Schools be the best choice, presuming that our families were going to choose these Charter Schools and they were going to maintain their current levels of operation.
- Robert Malerba commented it is important to define what is going to be the maximum enrollment and then all the other flexibility coming from there, rather than the flexibility of continuing to over-enroll the middle schools, defeating the long-term purpose of what the Board and community have been trying to maintain.
- Nolene Smith commented that the District has been working over the past eight years to develop smaller middle schools and to hear that the projection had one school over 700 by 2012 is crazy. The Greer report was presented, we all knew what the numbers would be. We knew that Charter Schools were going to take up 30% of the total enrollment by a certain date and now we hear talking all over again. The plan should be to look at what you do after this. Settle on what you have now that was brought forth and then look at changes for next year rather than disrupting and trying to fit by April. Keep in mind that the goal is to mix the best way we know how so that we can build quality education.

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

#### **2009-2010 School Calendar**

Board members have been presented with the draft 2009-2010 school calendar, reviewed by a constituency group, a panel of stakeholders that reviews the calendar every year. The calendar correlates to the Capital District BOCES calendar as it does every year. There is no wiggle room in this calendar. Labor Day comes later in September. A number of days were lost in the beginning of the year that had to be accommodated within the calendar. The calendar is reflective of past calendars with 184 days of instruction. One hundred and eighty days are contractual workdays for teachers, which results in 178 days of instruction for students as a result of not designating a Superintendent's Conference Day in March. In response to earlier comments regarding the number of Parent/Teacher Conference Days, in years past the District had half-days, which would require the District to remove half-days out of the calendar. The District eliminated those half days and designated Election Day as the Parent Conference Day. That does not preclude the fact that schools can still schedule evening parent conferences. In fact, a number of elementary schools do so in September. Election Day was designated as the official parent conference day because the District felt it was the most important time of the year to allow for dedicated time for parent to come into school.

- There is no conference day designated in the second half of the year when parents need to get on board to find out what's happening with their child. Also, staff attends the Superintendent's Day on Wednesday and then they are off on Thursday and Friday? Why? How did you come to that reasoning where teachers don't come back to school until September 8<sup>th</sup>. The first two days of school is preparing to start learning. With the lateness of the Labor Day holiday, the District had a choice of the Superintendent's Conference Day on the 8<sup>th</sup> with the students starting on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Since there is almost a week before Labor Day, the District took into account the other school districts that are also having superintendent's

conference days before school starts so that the students can start right on the 8<sup>th</sup>. The week of the 5<sup>th</sup> is not a workweek. We are asking staff to come in on the Wednesday before Labor Day for the Superintendent's Conference Day. Typically teachers are in their building during the day in preparation for the opening of school week. Teachers are on the committee and they have agreed to this, which is line with other school districts. The issue of no Superintendent's Conference Day in March was a decision to add to the student days as opposed to the Superintendent Conference Day. The cabinet made that recommendation, which was accepted by the calendar review team.

- Can the District consider a half-day parent conference day in March that correlates with the report card in March? That will be investigated.

Mr. Malerba expressed his appreciation that this parent teacher conference time will be included in March, which is a crucial time for parents, teachers and students to discuss how the student is doing as he/she looks toward the completion of the school year.

- If schools are opened a half-day instead of a full day, does the District receive reimbursement for a full day? Yes.
- If teachers are in school during the Regents Week can students be in class during that week? In the past the District looked into students maintaining class schedules and students taking Regents exams. As the number of students taking Regents exams increased it became more difficult to sustain instruction, similar to other districts. Teachers are assigned to proctor exams, professional development opportunities and scoring. In anticipation of next year this could be a consideration.

### **Strategic Plan Implementation Schedule**

Dr. Joseph presented the Strategic Planning Implementation Schedule, previously presented to the board on December 2, 2008, for additional discussion. The implementation schedule was developed in collaboration with cabinet members in a guided, facilitated session with the consultants for strategic planning and the superintendent. In preparation for this evening's discussion, in terms of feedback relative to prioritization of the items put forward, an implementation work sheet is attached to the schedule.

Following discussion relative to priorities, Dr. Joseph noted that the board adopted 35 result statements as part of the strategic plan, with the understanding that they would be implemented over the next three to five years. In developing the implementation plan with the consultants, the District was continually cautioned about not doing so much in any one year, trying to accomplish them all in one year that it would be come self defeating, which is why the implementation plan has been scaffolded in that way.

- In terms of smaller learning communities and building relationships, there are ways that the relationships can be fostered through student contact, mentoring, etc. Physical changes don't necessarily have to be complete for these practices can be initiated. Absolutely, there are things that can take place to create an atmosphere of connectedness that a small learning community might make even in the existing structure.
- Strategy #2 – We will ensure the emotional and physical safety and well being of our students in collaboration with community and family partners. If I understand the spreadsheet correctly, nothing will be done as far as safety is concerned until 2010-2013. Is that correct?

No. We took the plan out as far as next year. Those remaining items would be reviewed next year to identify which would be appropriate for 2010-2011.

- Concern was expressed that the Alternative Education Program needs to be brought forward as soon as possible. This might be an opportunity for the District to work in collaboration with the larger community to reach out and identify other people who could be supportive of our efforts. Also consideration of the possibility of revisiting the possibility of establishing or identifying possible members on the think tank in anticipation of the work that will begin during the 2009-2010 school year.

### **2009-2010 Budget Development Program Strategies & Initiatives**

Dr. Joseph advised this evening the board would hear a presentation on the Special Education and Foreign Language Programs in the District. Dr. Joseph introduced Debbie Sharpe-DeFries, Director of Special Education, Michelle Bridgewater, Assistant Director and Darlene King, Chairperson of the Committee on Special Education.

Ms. DeFries gave a presentation on the Special Education Program, which included department goals, budget considerations, data, budget variables, 2009-2010 program outcomes and ongoing consideration. Ms. De Fries noted the anticipated budget impact is staff reduction, looking toward more effective service models that promote greater success.

- What is the total amount the District has allocated for Special Education? Approximately \$28.4 million. There is also a significant amount of state aid for special education.
- The goal in working with special education children is to work with them until they can be moved into mainstream classes? Correct. Do you have data that indicates the percentage of students per year that are integrated into the mainstream? Those are the declassification numbers. Last year 24 students were moved into regular classes.
- The hidden factor is that when charter schools have a problem with special education students, they are returned back to the district. Charter schools do not have any self-contained classrooms.
- Is funding returned to the District? The District is billed every two months for special education students based on their attendance.
- Is there more that can be done relative to pre-school intervention? Research has already been initiated in the event that the District is responsible financially.
- Is the Harcourt Series used in the Pre-K Program? Yes. It starts in Pre-K.
- If a parent out of the District enters their child, who has a disability, into a private school in Albany, the School District is responsible for providing special education services. The District does bill the home District. Presently, there is conversation around this issue on the State level.

Ms. Wiley expressed concern when the District tries to reduce staff for those students who have extra needs and services to help them mainstream or to become declassified.

Mr. Davis, parent of a student with special needs, advised communication between school therapists and parents is crucial.

The Board also heard a presentation on the foreign language program. What previously was referred to as foreign is now called LOTE (Languages Other Than English) in the District,

including program objectives, at each level, course offerings, program strengths, program concerns and issues, program success stories, staffing and budgetary implications, options to consider. Ms. Rudnick noted that the City School District of Albany provides coursework in foreign language studies well beyond the requirements identified by the State Department of Education at all instructional levels.

- At the Elementary level are the teachers certified in foreign language? Teachers are certified in Elementary Education and the languages they teach.
- Relative to Latin in the high school, is it only one class of 7 in AP and IBO? Currently there are 25 students in the classes at the high school. The number 7 is the number in the AP and IBO.
- What do we know about young student's exposure to a second language in terms of their proficiency in English? Based on the Dual Language Program it appears there is a direct correlation to the proficiency in English. However, the program at the elementary level does not allow sufficient time on task to have a significant impact on the student's proficiency in English.
- Is it possible that schools could pool their AP-IBO students in a Chinese or Latin class and benefit from a distance learning hook-up? The need is there. That might be a way for Districts can work together to save staffing costs.

Dr. Joseph advised if Board Members have interest in a particular program that could be built into future presentations between now the budget adoption they should forward that information to the Superintendent.

### **BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The Policy Committee also discussed a proposal on the Hall of Fame Program. The concept will be presented to the Board at a future meeting, along with the Volunteer Policy.

### **BOARD MEMBER ITEMS**

Mr. Egan noted he raised a point of order relative to amending motions and proposed that when an amendment to a motion is offered that the entire body vote on that rather than the mover of the motion making the decision as to whether that amendment is going to be adopted. Mrs. Gaffuri recommended that this issue be brought forward when counsel is present at a meeting.

Ms. Mackey advised she had the opportunity to attend the African American Heritage Celebration. It was a wonderful experience. The student Ambassadors did an excellent job. Any opportunity that board members have to witness these types of celebration in the schools would be a wonderful experience.

Mrs. Brandon noted the NYSSBA Conference on Legislative Issues is scheduled for March 1, 2 & 3, 2009. NYSSBA is encouraging every board member in New York State to attend this conference. Registration is free to ACSB Board Members.

**Adjournment**

Ms. Mackey made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 p.m.