



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
April 23, 2009
7:00 p.m.

Delaware Community School

PRESENT: Barbara Gaffuri, President
Melissa Mackey, Vice President
Judy Doesschate, Secretary
Dr. Mark Barth
Rose Brandon
Daniel Egan
Wayne Morris
Dr. Tresa Diggs
Bill Hogan
Linda Rudnick
Linda Jackson-Chalmers

ABSENT: Dr. Eva Joseph

Call to Order:

- Meeting was called to order at 7:05 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.

Ms. Mackey made a motion to amend the agenda to include an addendum, placing a third information item, marching band, and routine consent item, administrative appointment. Mr. Egan seconded the motion.

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

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Valerie Sleight addressed the board regarding the elimination of the elementary foreign language program, noting that there was no previous discussion and no input from the community about this decision. It seems kind of sneaky.
2. Mary Sloan addressed the board regarding the elimination of the elementary foreign language program. Given the fact that children are more receptive to learning languages at a young age, this is short-sighted, ignorant and a big mistake.
3. Alex Streznewski addressed the board thanked Mr. Cioffi and the technology team for attending the TOAST PTA meeting to discuss the plan for technology for TOAST students. Ms. Streznewski also spoke about a Black History Month project her daughter participated in that was a very positive experience and the music opportunities at TOAST along with an upcoming field trip to Schodack Island State Park to celebrate the Henry Hudson, Native Americans and the Hudson River, urging the District to seek media coverage for this event scheduled for May 9th.
4. Sofia Jones, a 5th grade student at Albany School of Humanities, addressed the board regarding her disappointment relative to the elimination of the foreign language program. Spanish is an important language to know because lots of people in America speak Spanish.

5. George Benson addressed the board relative to the positive effect of the professional development in the District by the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA), urging the board to continue its commitment for this program. It has made a huge difference at Harriet Gibbons High School. Having work with other professional development programs in the District, NUA is the most effective program he has been involved with. Mr. Benson also spoke about the success of Harriet Gibbons in terms of test scores and suggested that the lesson is not to end Harriet Gibbons, but instead to use its approach as a model for high school redesign.
6. Mirca Uhl addressed the board relative to her experience as a teacher at Harriet Gibbons with the NUA program. Everyday NUA strategies are used in the classroom. This is a life-long skill for teaching students. NUA strategies are also used to develop professional development within the school. Ms. Uhl advised she uses NUA strategies at home in her personal life.
7. Alyssa Holt-Riley addressed the board relative to her experience with NUA, incorporating thinking maps into lessons and saw immediate results. NUA strategies and practices have undoubtedly given her students at Harriet Gibbons the tools for knowledge construction, comprehension and analysis. With the foundations of NUA in research, its effectiveness can be clearly and logically articulated. For the sake of our students, Ms. Holt-Riley asked that the District remains in collaboration with NUA.
8. Anthony Clement, Principal of Harriet Gibbons High School addressed the board regarding the NUA from an administrative standpoint. This is the first time that administrators have been involved in a professional development program that teaches administrators how to lead. Mr. Clement noted that NUA has provided him the tools to become a better leader, in order to have the dialogue with the teacher to increase performance in the classroom. NUA changes the culture of how we do business for the sake of the kids that are in front of us. NUA is not just about teachers, it is also for the people the board has entrusted to lead buildings and to make changes
9. Bridgett Mattison addressed the board regarding the elimination of the foreign language program. Research shows that children at the elementary level who study a foreign language achieve greater, higher standardized test scores, have greater cognitive development in such areas of mental flexibility and higher order thinking skills. As an educator, Ms. Madison asked the board to look into different avenues of the budget before the elementary foreign language component is eliminated.
10. Marlin Anderson addressed the board offering praise for the board as they make the tough choices working through the budget. In response to a statement by another speaker Mr. Anderson noted that each school in this community should be no better than another. The community should have the same regard for Giffen Memorial Elementary as TOAST or any other school. Mr. Anderson asked that the selection of a new superintendent be delayed until after the November election.
11. Robert Malerba addressed the board regarding the enthusiasm of those who spoke about the NUA. This is linked to the think tank to be created to figure out how to best help all the non-honors students. The task of a think tank would be to look at the different systems to get administrator, teacher and parent input, not to try and figure this out. Also, the elimination of the elementary foreign language program is a big mistake. The community needs to be brought into this process more.

INFORMATION ITEM

School District Budget Notice

Mr. Hogan presented the School District Budget Notice. This is a regulatory mandate that this notice be mailed to all households within the district. There is some ability to make adjustments to the paragraph related to what happens if the 2009-10 budget is not approved by a majority of the voters. The remainder of the document is as prescribed by regulations.

- Is there a requirement that the District include a statement indicating the estimated taxes on a house worth \$100,000?

That information is provided in the budget newsletter, which is printed and will be mailed to the public soon. The only recent change is additional information about STAR, which created much more confusion and has been omitted. The primary purpose is to remind people in the District of the budget vote.

Mr. Hogan noted board approval of this document is not necessary. Board members were in favor of voting on the item. Ms. Doeschate made a motion to approve the School Budget Notice. Mr. Egan seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Middle School Enrollment

Dr. Diggs provided information related to color coded forms that have been used in the middle school enrollment process for Philip Livingston Magnet Academy (PLMA) student preference, PLMA neighborhood preference, Stephen & Harriet Myers Middle School neighborhood preference, and sibling preference. On February 26, 2009, PLMA hosted the quarterly PTA Honor Roll Dinner at which time Middle School options were presented to PLMA families in grades 6 and 7. Families were given preference forms to complete. Approximately 20 families completed and returned the forms that evening. Student preference forms were distributed by the teachers to the remaining students the week of March 2 – 6, 2009. Additional preference forms were mailed with all the 3rd quarter Interim Reports on March 17, 2009. Phone calls were made to families not submitting forms during the week of March 30-April 3, 2009. Students who had not submitted forms were called to the office during the 8th period on April 2nd to receive a final form. A team from PLMA made home visits to students who did not submit preference forms during the week of March 30 – April 3, 2009. Dr. Diggs continued with a breakdown of student placement in the two middle schools and North Albany Academy. There are a total of 164 sixth and seventh graders that will be reassigned. One hundred and forty have indicated their preference. Another 5 are in self contained placements and 2 are in alternative education placements. Seven students have been unresponsive in identifying their preference.

- We did not anticipate that students would be selecting North Albany Academy. The District will be looking at those numbers and also those students who will be staying in their elementary school.

Marching Band

Ms. Savino and Mr. Cady presented information regarding a field trip for the District Marching Band that has been invited to travel to Washington, D.C. to participate in the Memorial Day Parade. Selection was based on a performance tape and a music recording to represent the entirety of New York State. Mr. Cady noted he views this event as the pinnacle of his career as a Music Teacher. The students are going to be part of a historical parade down Constitution Avenue that's been in place since the end of the Civil War. Students will be enriched not only by playing for the President, but also have an opportunity to witness history and culture.

Students will travel to Washington on May 23rd by bus and return to Albany on May 26th. The total number of students in the band is 61 in grades 4 through 12, 54 students and 12 chaperones will be traveling to Washington. Ms. Savino reviewed a listing of deposits, donations, contributions and fund raising efforts. The total cost of the trip is \$41,205. To date the group has raised \$24,503. There is presently an outstanding balance of \$16,702.00 with additional fund raising events scheduled.

- What is it that you are asking of the board?

We are asking that if there is a shortage in the fund raising before the final payment is due, is there availability to use district money that could be repaid through additional fund raising after the event or is there another options that could be presented?

- Can funds be taken from the General Fund for this purpose?

Mr. Hogan advised he reviewed this with counsel and he concurred with the District's opinion that that this is an education based field trip and it is legally permissible for the District to provide support for this trip.

- How much are the students being charged for the trip?

The parent group made the decision that \$100 per student would be reasonable. In reality its actually \$75 toward the cost of the trip and \$25 goes toward the purchase of black marching band shoes so that all the members of the band are in full uniform.

- There will be two buses?

There will be two buses. Originally there were parents who were willing to drive down, which would allow for students to fit on one bus. We have since learned that insurance regulations and the way the trip is planned, all participants have to be on the bus. This added a significant amount of money to the trip.

- The proportion of chaperones seems to be high and are chaperones contributing to their own expenses?
- The district has already taken \$5,000 from the general fund for this. This amount would be added to any additional funds the District would provide. If the District were to cancel the trip 20% of that \$5,000 would be non-refundable.
- It was noted that the marching band director has know since July, 2008 that the band was chosen to go to Washington D.C. yet the board is receiving this funding request one month before the trip.

A suggestion was made that the District match incoming donations. The maximum contribution would be half of the remaining \$16,702, \$8,351. This cuts the fund raising need in half. Discussion followed relative to chaperone expenses, contributions from other sources in the City and the time constraints related to fundraising.

Mr. Cady noted that his concern for student safety during this event calls for additional chaperones considering the age range of the students. Also chaperones are in the same economic situation as the students. It would be difficult to impose costs on chaperones, given the time remaining before the trip takes place. In discussion with other school districts, practice is that the district pays for the majority of the trip because they consider these people as working.

Public comment included concern related to spending this money when there are other priorities in the District, the opportunity for these students, the hard work these students have done in raising money and the opportunity for a life changing experience for these students.

The board agreed to go forward with a matching fund concept, where the District would match dollar for dollar donations to cover the cost of this program. Based on the timing of the trip, the board also agreed to act on it this evening to allow the fundraising to proceed as a matching fund donation. Mr. Hogan distributed the following resolution, which had been reviewed by counsel in preparation of possible action on this item at this meeting. Mr. Hogan clarified, for auditing purposes the \$5,000 already allocated from the music budget would be included in the dollar amount indicated on the resolution. The resolution reads as follow:

RESOLUTION

Marching Band Field Trip to Washington, D.C.

May 23 – 26, 2009

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the field trip involving the Albany High School Marching Band going to Washington, D.C. from May 23 to 26, 2009 for curricular activities related to music and other academic areas is approved.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that the District shall contribute an amount not to exceed \$13,351, \$8,351 of which will only be allocated dollar for dollar matching of future fund raising activities.

Mr. Egan made a motion to approve the resolution, Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. The board voted 5 ayes and 2 abstentions (Mr. Morris & Ms. Doeschate) to approve the motion.
Motion approved.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Mrs. Gaffuri presented the administrative appointment of David Hodgkinson, Business Administrator for approval. Ms. Doeschate made a motion for approval. Ms. Mackey seconded the appointment. Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to convene an executive session for discussion of particular personnel. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

The board voted 6 ayes and 1 nay (Mr. Egan) to approve the motion.
Motion passed.

The board reconvened and the vote was called.

The board voted 6 ayes and 1 abstention (Mr. Morris).

Motion passed.

Dr. Barth left the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Math Textbook Review

Mrs. Rudnick noted since the New York State Math standards were changed in 2005, there have been many changes in Mathematics in schools across the State. With the establishment of performance indicators, or learning goals that identify skills that students must be taught in Math. There has been an increased rigor to the math work that needs to happen in math classrooms daily. The current resource, Math Trailblazers, which is a reformed math program, currently in use in the District for the past seven years is not addressing some of the key performance indicators that students need to learn in the elementary grades.

Mrs. Rudnick noted math scores have remained steady and/or in some cases increased. This is due to extensive curricular work projects in the summer under the direction of the instructional supervisor and the math coach, extensive professional development training and also the purchased of supplemental resource material to make the math program whole. Following a thorough review of the selection process for a new textbook series the recommendation to the board this evening is the HSP Math for New York (NYS).

Mrs. Mitchell, Instructional Supervisor for Mathematics gave a presentation on the recommendation and rationale for adoption of the HSP Math for New York textbook. This Textbook has increased alignment to NYS Math Standards, provides an instructional resource to support student learning styles, provides more efficient planning for staff when meeting needs of all students and establishes a primary instructional math resource. Mrs. Mitchell reviewed the evaluation process, program strengths and features, and the next steps in the process of bringing this text into the classroom. The cost of the textbook is \$255,477.92, which will be paid from the District textbook aid. The cost benefit of this text includes new NYS aligned resources in every classroom, support for teachers in math teaching and support for families to build home-school partnerships.

- Why did it take so long to replace the Trailblazer series?

In 2002 when the District selected Trailblazers most of the District had adopted a reformed model math program and this was one of the best texts available. Through CDEP, the District has established a calendar for review and adoption of programs throughout the District.

Supplemental materials were purchased to insure that what students were being taught and what was being tested was one and the same.

- What is the District doing to help those students that have only had the Trailblazer instruction?

Two years ago, the District received a grant that focused on teacher's profession development in math. The teachers content knowledge about how children learn math as well as how math actually functions as a part of our daily life and other strategies of how to learn has changed the way teachers teach math. This is a major factor in student growth in math. Strategically, the District is able to more accurately identify student needs and initiate appropriate remediation.

- Will routine evaluations take place to determine the effectiveness of this new program? How would we know and how soon would we know if this is successful?

Parallel paths have been developed and the use of data has been incorporated in the evaluation process. Improvements at all levels will be monitored.

- Envision was another option that was reviewed. What is the number of schools that favored Envision and did they favor Envision?

The initial Math Committee, comprised of teachers from across all district schools, primarily classroom teachers as well as some principals was formed. The analysis of both programs by this group was close. The Committee was extended to include the vendors, representatives from every school, including special education staff spent a full reviewing the programs. There were three principals and teachers in attendance. Out of the 21 people in the room, 20 chose this program.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORT

Dr. Barth advised the Policy Committee met to review suggested changes in the Code of Conduct policy relative to the pre-superintendent conference.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Mr. Morris requested that the board consider developing a budget committee for public input in the next budget process. Board members indicated their support for this item.

Ms. Doesschate advised she is unavailable for the first meeting in September and asked that the board consider rescheduling that date if it is also inconvenient for other board members.

Adjournment

Dr. Barth made a motion to convene into executive session to discuss particular personnel. The board will not be reconvening this evening. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.