



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
June 18, 2009
7:00 p.m.

Philip J. Schuyler Achievement Academy

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

CONTRACT FOR EXCELLENCE

Mr. Hogan noted that the public hearing for the Contract for Excellence was cancelled. The New York State Education Department has notified the District that it will not be required to develop a Contract for Excellence for 2009-2010 due to the increase in Charter School tuition for 2009-2010, approximately \$2.9 million, is greater than the entire amount of the Contract for Excellence.

While this exception releases the district from the contract obligation for 2009-2010, it does not reduce the amount of state aid that the district will receive. Many of the programs that began this year under the Contract for Excellence will continue next year.

Due to this development, the public hearing that was scheduled on the Contract for Excellence this evening has been cancelled.

Call to Order:

- Meeting was called to order at 7:10 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 district has received four awards in the National School Publication Relations Association 2009 Publication in Electronic Media Contest, included in these were two awards of excellence for the district newsletter and the Champion Campaign in this year, an award of merit for the 2008-09 annual calendar and honorable mention for 2008 newsletter. Entries for the state contest are due next month and Mr. Ron Lesko will be submitting those as well.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Peter Leue addressed the board relative to the decision to keep Mr. Reynolds at Albany High School. Mr. Leue also talked about the issue of parking at Albany High School and the lack of information regarding the student parking at the high school.
2. Maria Harpel addressed the board regarding the Marching Band Trip to Washington, D.C. Students represented the Albany City School District and the State of New York in the first Memorial Day Parade of President Obama's administration. This was the only group from the State of New York that was asked to participate in the parade. Ms. Harpel was one of the chaperones on this trip. Following the parade, the Marching Falcons had the honor of being the only band invited to perform at the First Annual "National Call to Service Rally" at the World War II Memorial. Thank you to Brian Cady, John Halverson and Amanda Marshall. Without them this would not have been a reality. Students will remember this trip for the rest of their lives.
3. Robert Malerba addressed the board regarding the formation of the Alternative Think Tank. Consideration of closing the achievement gap should be part of this process.
4. Adele O'Connell addressed the board regarding the issue surrounding the music program and the elimination of AP and IB courses. In today's competitive environment these courses can offer students a significant leg-up.
5. Brian Cady & John Halverson addressed the board expressing their appreciation for the support offered by the board for the marching band trip to Washington. Mr. Cady noted the trip was truly a life changing opportunity for these students.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Routine Consent Items were presented for approval as follows: Appointments (Summer School 2009); Resignation, Abolishment of Positions, Resolutions (Approval of Donation of Embroidery Machine to Vo-Tech Center, Approval of \$10,000 Donation to Arbor Hill Elementary School playground, Senior Tax Exemption, 2009-2010 School Lunch Prices).

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

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Technology Program Updated

Mr. Cioffi, Chief Information Officer, gave a very comprehensive update of the district's Technology Program including objectives, staffing and responsibilities. Dr. Michael Radlick, Technology Consultant with Learning Technology Consultants reviewed the infrastructure throughout the district, which includes high-speed WAN and Internet connection, access to data resources and applications, including the Cisco IP telephone system, help desk support through the network, laptop carts in several buildings. Mr. Radlick reviewed the technology noted that every renovated school facility includes a technology workstation "refresh" at the time of re-opening. Sandy Paben of Renaissance Educational Consultants reviewed the educational technology program and Mark Place, the district's Technology Coordinator presented the current technology, future plans and the time frame associated with each phase. A revised Technology Plan will be presented to the board in 2010. Mr. Cioffi concluded the presentation with various items that will be coming before the board within the next year in order to update the district's technology program.

- Was technology in any way associated with the scheduling issue of last September?
No. Complete runs of the master schedule have taken place. Copies of this can be made available to board members. Schedules will go out July 22, 2009 as scheduled.

- Are all the schools wireless?

Not all our schools are wireless. Some schools have wiring available, but they do not have the wireless hub. This is one of the things that technology will be looking at during the next year.

- If there is wireless in the schools will students have the capability to bring laptops into class to work online?

That's an issue that we are presently working on. The district needs to be cautious about allowing students and staff the use of their personal laptops in the schools. The district has the capacity to track down a virus that attempts to get into the system and manually shut it down.

- How does the technology staffing level compared with other districts?

The department has evolved from an audio-visual department. There is still a need for professional development. Through attrition the district has been able to replace staff with people who have the necessary skills. More than likely there will be a need for additional staff. Recent publications indicate that there should be one staff member for every 50 computers. The district is nowhere near the figure. This issue will need to be addressed at some time in the future.

Mark Mishler addressed the board relative to students going to college where laptop computers are in use on a regular basis. As part of college preparation students should be used to using laptops in high school.

The Technology Department has had some discussion on this topic and is investigating possibilities.

Albany Community Television

Mr. Joseph Cunniff, a volunteer videographer from the Albany Community Television (ACT), addressed the board regarding the possibility of having board meetings videotaped and available for webcast. ACT was formed for the purpose of public access television by and for citizens. Meetings are recorded as they happen. There is no editing. The recording is uploaded and presented on webcast for public viewing. The viewer can move an arrow at the bottom of the screen to go forward or backward to any portion of the recording. Mr. Cunniff noted there are presently three volunteers with ACT videotaping at this time. ACT does not have the manpower to record these meetings. Mr. Cunniff suggested that this project be dovetailed with students who are already in the video curriculum in the high school. Ideally, by videotaping the meetings and learning conversion processes and uploading to the site, these students could then serve as additional volunteers for ACT. Possibly students could be presented recognition awards for this service, which would look good on their resume as they apply to college. ACT would be happy to do the necessary training for students.

- Could the recording be indexed so that the viewer could go directly to a particular agenda item?

The agenda items could be marked in minutes to indicate when a particular agenda item took place in the meeting.

ACTION ITEMS

National Urban Alliance for effective Education (NUA) Contract for 2009-2010

A chart indicating the NUA contract totaling \$600,000 for the 2009-2010 school year was presented for approval. Mr. Morris made a motion for approval. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. Dr. Diggs presented a revised budget broken down in various school levels, elementary, middle school, Albany High School and Harriet Gibbons. In consideration of these proposals, Dr. Diggs noted that the district has provided information on the success of NUA in the classrooms through presentations and remarks made by teachers and administrators. A few facts to be considered are improved test scores over the past two years. Research shows tells us that it takes 3 – 5 years to determine the success of this type of program. Teachers are passionate about NUA. They believe in the benefit to our children. The district respects the opinion of its teachers. The district has already invested \$2 million in the program. The district is halfway across the bridge, let's not stop now.

- We have been looking for outcome data from other schools. The NUA website indicates they have been in 27 districts, 8 in New York State and yet there is no outcome evaluation information on their website. I would like to see the success in other districts. I would still like to see what other districts accomplished as a result of the NUA. My suggestion this evening is to put off this decision and ask staff to get that information.
- In observing NUA over the last couple of years and listening to staff and administrators, I believe we do have some successful evaluations that indicate it is working in the elementary and middle schools. The high school and Harriet Gibbons are still out there. My suggestion is to approve the contract for elementary and middle school only and holding out the high school.
- I agree with supporting elementary and middle school. Overall, to some extent we have had a problem evaluating any kind of educational program. I continue to favor this until we find something else that might work. This district needs a professional development program. We can look at other programs, but I don't favor discontinuing NUA at this point. While I would agree to some expenditure on Albany High School, I do not feel comfortable supporting a whole program at this time.

A second chart excluding Albany High School was distributed for board consideration. This chart includes the expenditure of \$7,500 for the administrators training at the high school, which is something that the district feels strongly about.

- I have a problem deleting the high school piece. With the success at the elementary and middle school level, those students will be coming into the high school where staff has not had the NUA training. I am leaning toward tabling this item for tonight to allow the opportunity for additional data.
- We did receive some information on comparisons. My concern is that if we continue to delay, looking for more data, I'm not sure there is sufficient data available to make a comparison. I support continuing the program in the elementary schools and the middle schools. I am not in favor of tabling this item.

- This is the most professionally embedded program in the district. The program was developed to go from the lower grades up to the higher grades.
- There will be a number of middle school teachers going to the high school this year. That may change some of the philosophy at the high school. With the new principal coming on board, the high school piece should be held until January to allow his input.

It was noted that the NUA program is the only comprehensive professional development that this district has engaged in that specifically addresses the core issues surrounding the underachievement of the majority of students. It moves to change the culture of our schools, especially the high school by focusing on student strengths, not student deficits and establishing honest, genuine relationships with our students. NUA is all about changing attitudes and our school population by raising expectations and high levels of academic rigor for all students. This cannot be done in a few short years. Yes there is resistance, particularly at the high school because it's about teachers changing to meet the needs of the students. Everyone involved in the NUA training has observed first hand the structural changes in the classrooms. That is the framework of the NUA, relationships, culture and raising expectations. Staff is trained to meet the needs of the students.

Public Comment

1. Kathy Neuffer addressed the board in support of the NUA program. Having attended four different presentations the first year that NUA was in the district where parents and community members were present. I saw first hand students and teachers modeling some of the NUA techniques. The level of enthusiasm was very impressive. This is a program well worth keeping in place.
2. Nolene Smith addressed the board in opposition to the NUA. There has been nothing done at the high school for the last three, going into four years. We need to find something that is going to benefit these kids.
3. Adele O'Connell addressed the board relative to the evaluation instrument that was put in place when NUA was brought into the district. If there is resistance at the high school are there other schools that encountered this problem? How did they resolve this issue? I don't know if the board has enough information to move on this vote.
4. Robert Malerba addressed the board in favor of going forward with the NUA. The district needs to do a better selling job.
5. Esther Thornton addressed the board, noting that if the district believes in the program we have to make people buy into it.

Discussion continued relative to continuing the program or tabling the high school piece pending input from the new principal or going forward with the high school or pieces of the high school program and eliminating the Harriet Gibbons piece. Following the discussion the original motion was amended to approve the elementary initiative and the middle school initiative, less the evaluation for the elementary and middle schools, which leaves \$285,900 plus \$180,800, less the \$12,000 for a grand total of \$454,700.

The board voted 4 ayes, 1 nay (Mr. Egan) and 1 abstention (Mrs. Brandon)

Motion passed.

Code of Conduct Policy #5300

Policy #5300 Code of Conduct changes were presented for approval. Ms. Doesschate made a motion for approval. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. Ms. Jackson-Chalmers advised the Policy Committee met with the district Code of Conduct Committee. The recommended changes presented by the board were reviewed and approved. This revised information identifies the steps necessary for teachers to remove disruptive students from the classroom. There is also a revised flow chart. The remainder of the policy remains the same. With board approval the recommended changes will be made.

The board voted unanimously (6-0)

Motion passed.

Math Geometry Textbook

A suggestion was made to dispense with the presentation planned for this evening, based on the information board members received with a comprehensive description of the selection process and the highlights of the textbook. Board members were in agreement with the suggestion. This item will be presented at the next board meeting for approval.

2009-2010 Strategic Planning Activities

Dr. Diggs presented the following resolution for approval:

RESOLUTION

SoarPoint Associates

It is hereby resolved that the Board of Education of the City School District of Albany upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools approve contract services to be provided by SoarPoint Associates for the purpose of a consultation meeting to be held sometime during the period June-September 2009, regarding Strategic Plan Implementation and Annual Review processes at a total cost not to exceed \$2,000, including any associated fees and reimbursement for travel and lodging expenses.

The purpose of this meeting was to have three board members meet with SoarPoint to discuss the annual review and implementation plan for the Strategic Plan. Consultants would discuss ways they can be of assistance as the district moves forward with the Strategic Plan. A tentative date of June 29, 2009 was presented. Ms. Mackey will be participating as a board officer. Other board members would include Dr. Mark Barth (pending his availability) and Mr. Egan. Mrs. Brandon will attend if Dr. Barth is not available. A suggestion was also presented that the Interim Superintendent should be invited to this meeting. Ms. Doesschate made a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

The board voted 4 ayes, 1 nay (Mr. Egan) and 1 abstention (Mrs. Brandon)

Motion passed.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORT

No reports

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Mr. Egan asked that the board begin discussion of extending the school day, primarily the elementary grades, and options associated with that issue. Contract negotiations will not be scheduled for quite a while. However, the board could begin discussing this possibility.

Mr. Egan asked that the Audit Committee review the tax assessment process.

Mrs. Mackey requested a presentation of the entirety of the district's music program.

Adjournment

Mr. Morris made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Egan seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 p.m.