



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

June 2, 2009

7:00 p.m.

Albany High School

PRESENT: Barbara Gaffuri, President
Melissa Mackey, Vice President
Judy Doeschate, 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

- Through the efforts of Mrs. Rosalyn Gaines-Harrell, Principal of Arbor Hill Elementary School, and her collaboration with Senator Breslin the district has received a contribution of \$40,000 for the playground at the new Arbor Hill School. This is in addition of \$10,000 from SEFCU. Dr. Joseph extended gratitude and congratulations to Mrs. Gaines-Harrell.
- Last week Senator Breslin sponsored related events for Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology. Students visited the New York State Senate and while they were there a public service announcement was recorded regarding summer reading, featuring the TOAST students with the Senator, which will be aired some time in the coming weeks. The students visited the senate media office and that allowed them to see live TV recordings of the state senators being interviewed as well as other recordings that took place while they were there as a first hand experience.
- Several administrative appointments are on the agenda this evening. Dr. David McCalla was introduced as the principal at Albany High School. There was a rigorous search for this position. The board will be making an appointment of an Interim Superintendent, Dr. Raymond Colucciello. Also, this evening the new principal of Delaware Community School will be Thomas Giglio, former principal at Philip Livingston Magnet Academy. Mr. Stanley Harper will be moving into the Interim House Principal at Albany High School.
- The district is pleased to announce the district's performance on the 2009 New York State Math Assessments. Faculty and students have been diligent about working to meet the standards as they exist. The district shares gains in performance that have been noted across the State. The district is committed to high standards for all students and has been relentless in efforts to meet them.

We are proud to recognize the gains in state-wide testing made across the district in Math in grades 3 to 8. District leaders, teachers, staff members and students are to be commended on their accomplishments. Eleven out of 15 schools had double digit gains in Math. The District had a 9 point gain in terms of student achieving proficiency, moving from 58% to 67%. Students with disabilities hit a 10% gain, moving from 28% to 38%. The district had the biggest gains ever in grade 8 testing with a 15% point gain and grade 5 with a 12% point gain. This didn't happen by accident. The results were achieved not by any change in a test, but by deliberate, thoughtful and committed improvement efforts. The district will embrace these gains as evidence of the effectiveness of its work so that we can be encouraged to continue to improve and progress and meet the highest of expectations with every confidence.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Richard Decker addressed the board regarding the Harlem Children's Zone project in New York City, noting the significant improvement in standard deviation range of the students involved in this project. Mr. Decker urged the district to focus professional development dollars on efforts for teachers in the district on developing teaching, management and student programs that align with those successfully employed by the Harlem Children's Zone.
2. Barbara Smith addressed the board regarding professional development resources being used in learning the highly successful techniques of the Harlem Children's Zone, urging the district to read the book by Paul Tuff, "Whatever It Takes", Geoffrey Canada's quest to save and change Harlem in the America. The Obama administration has made the commitment to establish 20 neighborhoods around the United States based on this model. Steps need to be taken to have Albany become one of these 20 neighborhoods, starting with professional development of teachers.
3. Marlin Anderson addressed the board regarding the appointment of the interim superintendent, noting that he is interested in delaying the appointment of the new superintendent until after the November election in order to have the input of the next Mayor in the selection of the new superintendent.
4. Mario Arthur addressed the board regarding his correspondence to the members of the board relative to the foreign language program, particularly the 6th grade program, urging the board to consider including additional languages in the program.
5. Kathy Neuffer commended the board on the speedy choosing a high school and an interim superintendent. These selections provide our community with a peace of minds that a smooth transition will occur in time to begin the new school year.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Ocasio Willson advised school is winding down, but students are winding up. Ocasio spoke about faculty and staff being prepared to insure the safety of faculty and students. Ocasio thanked the board members and staff for the opportunity of sitting at board meetings.

Mrs. Gaffuri presented Ocasio with a Certificate of Recognition and a gift certificate from the board members. Mrs. Gaffuri announced that Ocasio will be attending Vassar College in the fall and he is one of 33 seniors in New York State to receive a Gates Millennium Scholarship. Congratulations to Ocasio!

ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS

The administrative appointment of Dr. Raymond Colucciello, Interim Superintendent, effective July 11, 2009 through December 31, 2009, was presented for approval.

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

Motion passed

Appointment of Dr. David McCalla, Principal, Albany High School, effective July 1, 2009 was presented for approval. Mr. Egan made a motion for approval. Dr. Barth seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed

The transfer of Thomas Giglio, Principal, Delaware Community School, effective July 1, 2009, was presented for approval. Ms. Doesschate made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris made a motion for approval. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Additional Routine Consent Items were presented as follows: Proceedings of Meetings, May 5, May 19 Canvass of Vote, and May 21, 2009; Appointments (Interim Administrative Appointment, Civil Service, Itinerant Substitutes 2008-2009, Miscellaneous and Emergency Conditional Appointments); Resignations/Retirements; Terminations, Leave of Absence, Transfers; Attendance at Conferences; Treasurer's Report; Revenue Status Report 4/30/09, Appropriation Status report 4/30/09, Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund; Budget Transfers under \$10,000, Budget Transfers over \$10,000, Real Property Tax Adjustments, Award of Bids; Resolution to Approve State Aid Advance; Charter School Public Hearing Resolution, Contract for Excellence Public Hearing Resolution, District Policy Regarding Unemployment Insurance; Committee on Special Education, Subcommittee on Special Education, Committee on Pre-School Special Education; Authorization to Enter Into Contracts, and Field Trips. Mr. Egan asked that Authorization to Enter into Contracts be set aside. Dr. Barth asked that the proceedings of May 5, 2009 be set aside.

Ms. Doesschate made a motion to approve routine consent items absent those set aside. Mr. Mackey seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Proceedings of May 5, 2009 and May 21, 2009 were presented for approval. Dr. Barth made note of the outstanding documentation of the NUA discussion in the May 21st proceedings. Dr. Barth recommended that the sentence on public engagement on page 9 of the May 5th proceedings should read as follows, "Public engagement like we saw on middle school enrollment might be a way of generating interested board candidates". Dr. Barth asked that the proceedings of May 5, 2009 be reviewed and amended with additional clarification in the budget hearing documentation. Dr. Barth made a motion to approve the May 21st proceedings. Mr. Egan seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Dr. Barth made a motion to table the May 5th proceedings. Mr. Egan seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Authorization to Enter into Contracts was presented for approval. Mr. Egan made a motion for approval. Dr. Barth seconded the motion. Mr. Egan noted a \$2,500 proposed contract for the Albany City Council PTA for after school clubs, commonly referred to as the Chess Club was discussed at the last City Council PTA meeting, resulting in the possibility that this funding would not be continued. The contract being presented this evening is for the period of 7/01/08 – 6/30/09. Comment was made relative to the timeliness of contracts being presented for board approval. The district will follow up with the respective administrators on this project related to funding for the coming year.

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

Motion passed.

*Later in the meeting, Mrs. Gaffuri asked that her vote under all contracts be documented as abstained. The vote is changed as follows:

The board voted 6 ayes, 0 nays and 1 abstention. Mrs. Gaffuri abstained.

Motion passed.

Mrs. Gaffuri asked that the contract with St. Anne's Institute be set aside based on the fact that she is a former employee of St. Anne's Institute. Ms. Doeschate made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

The board voted 6 ayes, 0 nays and 1 abstention. Mrs. Gaffuri abstained.

Motion passed.*

FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT

Action Items Related to the Facilities Project

Approval of Change orders

Change orders for New Scotland Elementary School, Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology (TOAST) and Giffen Memorial Elementary School were presented for approval. Ms. Doeschate made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM

Social Studies Textbook Adoption

The 7th & 8th Grade McDougal Little American History 2008 and 6th Grade McDougal Littell World History 2009 Textbooks were presented for approval as recommended. Mr. Morris made a motion for approval. Mr. Egan seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

School Lunch Program

Proposal is to increase the cost for breakfast by \$.25 for the next three years and increase the cost for lunch by \$.75 for the 2009-2010 school year and an additional \$.50 for the following two years. Meals prices have not increased since September of 2007. Over 80% of the students that actually participate in the lunch program will not be impacted by this increase because they are on free or reduced lunch already.

- There is concern about a 50% increase in the elementary lunch and a 40% increase at the high school. The cost is approximately \$15 per child for those not on the free or reduced lunch program. In families with several children, this could become burdensome. Suggestion is for a \$.50 increase in the lunch price.

Similar size increases have been made in other districts. The thoughts is when the food service program is losing money, as it is, it is taking money that could be reallocated for other purposes. This increase brings the district more in line the first year with smaller adjustments in the next couple of years.

- There has been discussion of structural changes with the lunch delivery in the district and looking at different options. Where are we with that?

The district was moving to execute this in March and then there was a delay at the State level because they reconfigured their Request for Proposals and they weren't accepting the current one on the market. This was followed by the district's budget development. Currently, the district is moving forward with a new business administrator and this is one of his highest priorities.

- If the board agrees to vote on the first year increase, the district is not committed to the scheduled increase to 2012.

If the board approves a three year schedule, the district would come back to it. This isn't the only variable to remedy the problems in terms of finances in this program. This is just one of several initiatives that the district has taken in recent months. There was a major effort this past year to capture more student on the free and reduced lunch program. That reimbursement rate is approximately \$1.00 higher than the cost the district charges for paid meals. The district also did a considerable amount of work on menu planning to make it more marketable and financial reporting with monthly summaries. The district also started enforcing the charge limit. The district re-bid the vending machines and they are more profitable, offering healthier choices to students.

- As students get older the less cool it is to be eating lunch at the high school. A number of students eat their lunch from vending machines. The reality is Albany is behind other school districts in terms the cost for student lunches, which is unaffordable for Albany.
- I support the comments about backing off the long-term price increases. I think the district should look at one year, particularly since we are reviewing the whole management of the program. The only other thing I would add is that providing breakfast and lunch is part of education. If a student comes to school hungry, they are not going to learn.
- If a child doesn't qualify for free and reduced, comes to school without lunch, is there a lunch that is available to the student? Yes. No child goes without lunch. I also support looking at one year at a time.

The majority of board members were in agreement to increase breakfast \$.25 and lunch \$.50 for the coming year. Several expressed that they were comfortable with the proposed increases. The board will act on a resolution at the next meeting.

Student Code of Contact

The board annually reviews the Code of Conduct. Board members have been provided with the suggested modifications. Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers advised the Policy Committee reviewed the policy and more of the discussion was centered on preventative measures and how well the district is helping students to be more responsible citizens in the school. There were a series of meetings, both the Policy Committee and meetings with the district Code of Conduct Committee.

The recommended revisions do not effect changes in the intent of the code. They are clarifications, making the larger booklet more readable, flowing in a better motion. Recommendations include a Table of Content to facilitate maneuvering through the booklet. Pupil Personnel staff has been included and better defined as an essential partner. The language “in accordance with the Gun-Free Act, a student in possession of a firearm is subject to a minimum of one-year suspension. Under penalties #12 is changed from superintendent hearing to Pre-Superintendent Hearing Conference. The steps for the removal of a student from the classroom were clarified. Long-term suspension from school includes the following language; a Pre-Superintendent Hearing Conference can be conducted to resolve the matter by mutual agreement, rather than through the Superintendent’s Hearing. The next change is the relocation of the section related to students referred to the Office of Pupil Personnel. Since these revisions do not change the fundamental intent of the code, it will not be required to conduct a public hearing for these modifications.

It was suggested that the Policy Committee review the definition of disruptive student, the kind that teachers can handle and the substantially disruptive student that needs to be removed from the classroom. A suggestion was made to have counsel review the information presented to develop language that would clarify this issue. It was noted that often schools are automatically taking steps so following this code step by step may not be the case, but they are following the general intent and the procedures of removal of the substantially disruptive students from the classroom.

- Concern was noted that in a situation when a student is truly a victim, having been attacked by another students and they defend themselves, they are treated the same as the attacker, both students are given the same punishment, which is unfair. If students are not safe from other students, in that moment, the student is reacting, defending themselves.

In some instances, students have been given differential treatment. Situations have been resolved differently. It may not be consistent. That process needs to be looked at again.

- Disruption is disruption when you are trying to teach a class. This hinders the teacher from teaching. The student isn’t hurting anybody. There are different degrees of disruption. In reviewing this, it might help if there is some classroom observation. You need to have a teacher’s input.

Before the policy was brought to this level of revision, the district committee looked at this thoroughly and on that committee are all of the administrators that have to enact this code along with teachers on all levels. This have been reviewed not just be those of us in office, but also by the practitioners at the school site. They’re major concern wasn’t so much that anything needed to be added or removed, that it just needed clarification.

The policy will be presented at the next meeting with revisions for approval.

Strategic Plan Implementation

Strategic Result Statement 2.3 Creation of an Alternative Education Think Tank

The first part of the Strategic Plan discussion is related to the Think Tank. Board officers talked about ways of coming forward with compiling that Think Tank. It is one of our strategies. It is a priority to begin in 2008-2009 and something the district looks forward to initiating in some form or another before the 2009-2010 school year begins. The majority of the work from the Think Tank will occur during the 2009-2010 school year in terms of implementation. It overlaps both years. This has been a priority for the board, recognizing that it's not going to be solely a district endeavor. Experts from the community will be involved and welcomed to assist the district with this evaluation of programs. It is about the construct as well as the charge to the committee. Rather than presenting a template that the board could then work from, board officers suggested the opportunity for the board to brainstorm about possibilities for the Think Tank that would serve as a basis for constructing the composition and charge of the group.

One component should be several members who are academics, trained in evaluation research who can take a good hard look at what we are doing now, what is working, what is not working and other programs in other cities that are working, so that the district is not wasting time with programs that may sound good but don't work. The primary membership of this Think Tank should be people from the community, parents and other experts.

Previously the board has received background information on the district's alternative programs. That information could be brought forward to the committee for additional review. The information includes each one of the programs, the dollar amount that each one of these programs is currently consuming out of the budget and also the graduation success rate. What the district is spending and how many of the students in the program have actually graduated. The district had been working on some of these programs for a while and the success rates just were not there.

That was an excellent piece of work. We have had grids in the past that show program by program, detail relative to staffing and cost, cost per enrollee and so forth. Give the group everything we know about the students and an early conversation about what is the purpose of alternative education. Is it meant to be permanent for some portion of the population? Is it meant to be transitional? What are age appropriate alternative placements? What is the philosophy behind alternative placement? Why do we do it?

In terms of the overall charge of the committee, that should be one aspect of one of the functions of the committee. Initial thoughts include charge, comprehensive evaluation of existing alternative programs and supports and other pupil services, etc. that impact a child's emotional, social and physical well-being and identify what is performing well and what needs to be changed. However, in consideration of the district's Mission Statement, the committee should look at the Strategic Plan overall for guidance. There are aspects of it that talk about individual educational plans, providing additional supports and the parent/community connections that relate to this. This committee needs to understand what they are doing in the context of some of the other strategies that the Strategic Planning group already looked at. Looking at the Value Statements and the Strategic Boundaries in terms of not encouraging students to take lesser courses, respect of the individual, etc., reading the Mission Statement overall was something.

One of the charges of the committee might be to identify comprehensive educational program opportunities that will help insure that the emotional, social and educational needs of every child are addressed. Rather than taking students who are presenting problems in the classroom and isolating them, make sure that every child is educated in some way, by way of an alternative setting that might be better suited for those students who don't fit into other programming. A number of parents, most of whom have children who are struggling, members of the City Council PTA, a number of professionals, a child psychiatrist, social workers in jail situations, in courtroom situations, in family court, in criminal court, etc.

There needs to be an evaluation of where the district currently is, what programs are available, what outcomes is the district seeing. The district needs to develop a philosophy of alternative education with a distinction between disciplinary issues and children who would simply learn better in an alternative learning environment. Pupil Personnel Services will need to assist in making those distinctions. Is the focus on students who are out of school because of safe school violations for 5 to 10 weeks or are we looking at students who really would do better in an alternative learning environment. In evaluating what the district is doing now, to some extent the success of the present programs can be measured by looking at several students who are currently in the high school alternative program and go back. Were these the same students who were in middle school alternative programs for discipline or educational reasons? Are they the same students who were in elementary school? Again, with confidentiality in the forefront we could ask to develop some profiles of what do our high school alternative education students look like now in helping us develop what things we really need to target. It is imperative that we make that we have a good representation on the committee.

In identifying the members, there should be representation from the mental health field, the criminal justice system, probation, family court, and experts outside the field of criminal justice who could speak to the educational needs of the students. It is important to know what programs are out there now in our communities currently working for students. Partnerships that already exist that we could be strengthened and further developed. Best practices that are currently being used in the community that are working well for some of our students and how the district might we want to target those programs to be more inclusive to assist as many students as possible.

Parents with children who have been in the district's alternative education programs should be involved. From their prospective they can talk about what worked well for their kids and those things that didn't. In the re-design of the alternative education program, it should first be determined what a successful program would look like. With that in the forefront, the district would be able to do the kind of self evaluation that's going to be informative moving forward. Given that we have alternative education programs currently that span from elementary school through high school, it would be great if they could come up with different recommendations for different grade levels because we are dealing with different issues when we are talking about this.

The last piece that should be considered for membership is substance abuse experts. Substance abuse, being the child of a substance abuser/alcoholic is going to impact what is happening to you when you are in school. There may be students who might be on the cuff of or who are currently engaged in using illegal substances. That's a whole other realm of things that the district might not currently be equipped to deal with.

There should be one or more pediatricians on this committee. They deal with all aspects of the child and know who to refer to and deal with the academic issues of the child and see a lot that might not be seen in our school setting. I agree with the substance abuse piece, maybe a counselor in the field. Many of these students who do not make it in school resort to drugs and alcohol for many reasons. The aspect of what programs they are seeing from their clients that are not working for their clients over and over and over again. They are going to have a real say about what is working and what is not in working with their clients.

The alternative education program is a complex matter. There is no one single answer. There is no one right answer. We continue to think hard about it, something that really serves the students that are there. In looking at the complex needs of the few students who require an alternative education option, it really becomes demanding. The district has customized and there are opportunities for determining how effective they are, determining if we have the right answers, is essential. By looking at strengthening our education programs in the high school and rethinking or looking at the design of our programs to better serve all students, coupled with what we feel would be stronger services for our students in alternative education is a very solid combination.

One other possible member of this committee could be a representative from higher education. That person might have some insight relative to programs have helped some of their incoming students to be successful, coming from an alternative education program that is working and students with special needs who have attended programs that deal with struggling students who are being accepted at the college level. This could be somebody from a local community college or university they might want to serve on this committee.

Strategic Plan Implementation

2009-2010 Strategic Planning Activities

Going back to how the district got to the place it did in developing the Strategic Plan it was work that the district looks very proudly on as a quality work. This did not happen that way just by virtue of us getting together. The district was very deliberate about having resources to support the process. As the district moves forward thinking about this alternative education think tank, high school restructuring, or any other aspect of the implementation schedule, the district looks at it with that same deliberateness. One force that really compelled us or provided that check and balance and assisted us in getting to the right end was the technical assistance from Soar Point Associates. For those board members who did not participate in the initial selection process for strategic planning consultants, following a considerable investigation, SoarPoint Associates was the one group that surfaced that could meet the needs of the district in the development of the strategic plan. Recommendation was made to engage SoarPoint moving forward.

A lengthy discussion followed relative to investigating local consultants to oversee the evaluation piece. The issue of transition was discussed and the fact that with the changes in the cabinet and leadership, continuity related to the implementation of the strategic plan is important. Concern was also expressed relative to the expectation that the administration should be able to oversee this process, which presented the issue of having to address difficult situations that were handled by these consultants during the development of the strategic plan. The facilitation piece that was performed by SoarPoint was very effective. Board members noted that they would consider engaging consultants only in terms of the transition issue. A suggestion was made to invite Soar Point Associate to meet with three board members to determine what services they could provide to the district in moving forward with the strategic plan implementation and annual review.

Mr. Morris made a motion that the district would arrange for Soar Point Associates to meet with board members to discuss their services and that their reasonable travel expenses, not to exceed \$2,000 would be covered by the district. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

A question was raised regarding procurement issues and the fact that other candidates are not included in this process. Following additional discussion a suggestion was made to table the item to the next board meeting. Mr. Morris rescinded the original motion and made a motion to table the item until the June 18th meeting. Ms. Mackey agreed to rescind the motion and seconded the motion to table.

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

Motion passed.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Audit Committee met and discussed the school lunch program. New auditors met with the members to discuss reports. The budget committee was also discussed. That discussion will continue when all members of the committee meet. The budget committee will be charged with three tasks to be presented to the board, not necessarily involved in the budget development process.

A question was asked as to whether or not the district had received any information from the State Controller's Office related to their audit of the district that concluded last fall. As yet, the district has not received any information.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

- A request was made to have the Harlem Children's Zone as a future agenda item.
- A request was made to have a comprehensive presentation on the Foreign Language as a future agenda item.
- A group is working with Kathy Ryan to organize a 5K fund raiser. The money will go to the booster club, possibly homecoming weekend in mid-October.

Adjournment

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