



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**July 22, 2008**  
**7:00 p.m.**

**Eagle Point Elementary School**

**PRESENT:** William Barnette, President  
Dr. Mark Barth  
Judy Doesschate  
Melissa Mackey  
Wayne Morris

Dr. Eva Joseph  
Linda Jackson-Chalmers  
Bill Hogan

**ABSENT:** Barbara Gaffuri, Secretary

**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.
- Those present observed a moment of silence in recognition of Keith Crayon, a district employee who recently passed away.
- Mission Statement was read.

At the request of the President of the Board, Melissa Mackey made a motion to amend the agenda to include under Routine Consent, a contract with Whitney Young Health Center for the provision of physician services to the district and an Appointment of the District Physician. Dr. Barth seconded the motion.

The board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

- This summer, for the first time, four principals are attending the Harvard Principal Summer Institute. This is one of the most highly rated professional development seminars for building principals. Those attending are Cecily Wilson, Tom Giglio, Vibetta Sanders and Anthony Clement.
- Last week 51 Albany School District administrators and teachers participated in the National Alliance for Quality Education (NUA) coaches training that took place at the Desmond.
- A draft of the district's Contract for Excellence is currently available for review on the district website. A Spanish version of the contract is also posted. There is a link on the posting for the public to make comments via electronic response. Directions on how to provide written responses are also available on the website. The public comment period closes on August 7<sup>th</sup>. A public hearing is scheduled prior to the board meeting on August 5<sup>th</sup>. The public hearing will take place from 6:00 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. at Albany High School. This is a draft. The State Education Department made available to the district the actual template that identifies all the student information, student population targets, the achievement, and the financial data regarding the contract last week. The district is working with the Business Office and Office of Instruction and Data Office to put that information together. The full contract is due to the State Education Department on August 15, 2008.

- The district received an award on the Safe Schools Healthy Students Grant. The district has applied for that grant four times. The district is one of fifty-five districts nationally to receive the funding. The total award is \$6 million over four years, \$1.5 million per year. The impetus of the grant is what the district has titled A –PLUS for the Albany Partnership for Learning and Uniting Services. There are many, many partners with the district in this endeavor, Families Together, Department of Children, Youth & Families, Albany Police, Albany Probation, Department of Youth and Workforce Services, Parsons, Cornell Cooperative Extension, UAlbany, the Committee for Safe and Substance Free Schools, Albany System of Care. There is more to come on this. Information will be posted on the website. Needless to say, this means an increased level of service and the district is eager to work in partnership with so many community partners to better serve our students.

The President of the Board advised he received a letter relative to the Contract for Excellence and asked that the letter be forwarded to board members. The letter did not come to the district as part of the public comment to the district plan. The letter was more of the organizations effort to insure there are strong plans across the state as opposed to commenting specifically on the Albany plan. The district is required to do a need assessment on the public comment. Responses would be made based on the nature of the themed concerns.

The President of the Board congratulated the administration on the Safe School Healthy Students grant. This is a national grant that has been available for approximately 10 years. Albany's application has consistently been representative of a national model. For some reason previous applications have not been not approved. Thank you to the administration for continuing to pursue this grant for our students.

#### **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Michael Karp addressed the board relative to the Extracurricular Activity Code of Conduct Policy, clarifying that this policy does not supersede the Athletic Code of Conduct Policy.
2. Ashley Hooks of the Alliance for Quality Education addressed the board regarding the Contract for Excellence and the process of public participation.

At the request of the President of the Board, a motion was made by Ms. Doesschate to amend the agenda to include a discussion item on the TOPS Program. Dr. Barth seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion.

Motion Passed.

#### **TOPS PROGRAM**

The superintendent advised the district continues to put forward a program construct for consideration by the board. A number of outside service providers were solicited, with one response from Berkshire Farms. Discussions have taken place indicating that concomitant with soliciting provision of contract service, the district began to develop its own internal program. At this point the district would be pursuing a district run program as opposed to a contract service. The program construct closely mirrors the program that has been part of the discussion, serving an average of 75 students, staffed accordingly, with a primary foundation of a computer based on-line program that has had a high degree of success keeping students at pace, moving at an individualized pace, students coming from all levels of instruction with all sorts of requirement needs.

The district has also been reviewing facility needs, primarily focusing on Philip Livingston Magnet Academy based on space and availability and capacity to put that structure in place. The program would be moved from the Adult Learning Center as the district begins to grow program services there for alternative education. Other services will include the administrative oversight and social-emotional supports. The district feels very confident that it can emulate the program and the services that were presented in the original proposal in a district-run program within the budget that was put forward, using a district facility.

Questions and comments put forward from board members will be taken into consideration. The primary thoughts were about administrative oversight and security supports. Administrative oversight would be someone responsible to one of the district's strong leaders, falling within the Office of Pupil Personnel Services. There will need to be a very deliberate distinction between the regular PLMA Middle School Program and the TOPS program. In collaboration with the Principal of PLMA, discussion have included staggered start times, separate entrance/exits, transportation to and from school brought directly to entrances and different measures of increased oversight so that these are a more secured group of students. Security staff would not be shared, but because the enrollment is so much more reduced the district would be able to utilize some staff. The Principal is comfortable with the proposal.

The NovaNet Program is a very successful on-line program, utilized by over 3500 schools nationwide, based on NYS Learning Standards, focused on individual instruction with progress monitoring, curricular flexibility and a non-traditional approach to pedagogy. This is a much stronger program that bodes well to serve these students in a much better way so that when they transition back to their existing school they are stronger academically, better served in terms of social, behavioral, emotional needs that they may present and a far greater chance of being successful within their home school than when they arrived. Training would be provided for all staff and provisions will be made for technical support. It will also take approximately 45 days to get the technical program running with the necessary connections in place.

The district is now seeking guidance or direction in terms of moving forward to put these program components in place, ready the site, hire staff and develop a contract for board approval on the technology piece of the program.

- With regard to security in the building, how many security staff members are currently assigned to that building and how many would be assigned to this program. There are at least six there. There was some discussion related to whether or not an additional security staff member would be assigned to the program. This will be further reviewed for clarification.
- There are 4 FTE Teachers assigned to this program. I thought in the original Berkshire proposal the district was talking about 1 teacher for every 10 students. Four teachers with full capacity would be four classrooms with 20 students in each classroom. Seventy-five students is the figure that the district builds to in terms of average. There is a little time to phase implementation, given the fact that there would not be students suspended in the early part of the school year. It's more about the way students are scheduled rather than a self-contained class of students.

- How long would training on the NovaNet Program normally take? It is two full days of training, six hours each day and then two additional days, six hours each.
- Other aspect of the Berkshire Farms construct was the anger management piece. Is that going to be built into this program? Yes, that kind of social emotional support would be available to the students.
- Concerns regarding security have been covered. Cafeteria and Gym use – how is that going to be handled in that building? There has to be a plan because these facilities are on the other side of the building. There are also concerns related to having TOPS in the same building as middle school students. Scheduling will be very carefully worked out. Right now the TOPS Program is in the mix with other students, including middle school students at the Adult Learning Center. Accommodations were made for those students in a much smaller structure. There have been scheduling strategies, supervised strategies to be sure that students from TOPS are somewhat separated from other students.

Understanding the concern and understanding what we want to accomplish as a goal, is to have it as a separate and distinct program. We really do need to focus on those thoughts, about lunch and physical education to be sure that we have accomplished what we intended in terms of keeping the students separate and distinct. The building itself is a large physical plant. It's actually the only space available at this time for a program of this nature. While it may not address the concern about two student populations in the same building, at the same time, we have reviewed it very carefully, particularly with the building principal. There is so much unused space that it gives the district the opportunity not just to house the program separately, but also to assure ample room between the programs so that they are not next to each other.

- This dialogue makes me uncomfortable because we have created “us and them”. We have created two separate classes of students and you expressed a concern if there is a fire drill there would be co-mingling. These are all of our students. I understand that these students have had safe school violations, but they are still our students. The SURR report identified issues with the physical plant of that building. And, while we are looking to house them on the first floor, so the leaking room would not be an issue, it is still a building that needs significant repair. We've had discussions about how long we are going to have middle school students there and if we might reach a point where we have to close that school. What's going to happen? Are we temporarily housing this program at PLMA or are we permanently housing this program at PLMA? Either way, all of our students deserve to have a physical plant that is conducive to learning. We have raised concerns about that being conducive to our middle school students, our TOPS students deserve no less. We are not up against a deadline. We are looking at needing 40-45 days to get NovaNet up and running.

This is such a significant issue, alternative education, that making decisions because we have deadlines as opposed to making decisions because we have absolutely vetted everything and we know that this is the best that we can do makes me uncomfortable. There was a presentation at the last meeting about report cards. That was a huge process. There were about 25 people working on that and there are ad hoc committees where we bring internal and external experts.

The issue of alternative education has been an issue in the district for some time and is deserving of that kind of analysis. That's not to say that the district does not have a lot of expertise in the district. Who better than us to analyze the data that we have, but there may be individuals in our community, beyond Berkshire or Parsons, that are vested in this issue and can bring a different level of expertise.

NovaNet is a national level program, but are we sure that our students will be able to do NovaNet. We are going to have to train all teachers on how to use it. But, how savvy are these students with technology that on-line learning is something that they can pick up quickly and that is really going to help to supplement them? We need to have something in place and I want to move forward with alternative education.

Following an extensive discussion board members made a decision to go forward with the program at PLMA for the 2008-09 school year. The district will continue discussions relative the placement of this program for next year based on the success of the program.

#### **ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS**

Mr. Morris made a motion to approve the routine consent items as amended: Health Services Contract – Schenectady City School District; Advanced Therapy – Physical & Occupational Therapy; Dr. Maria Fast – Behavioral Intervention Support; Jennifer Kilinski – Music Therapy Services; Options with Learning, L.L.C. – Evaluation, Speech & Language & Auditory Training; Dr. Harvey Scherer – Psychiatric Consultation; Dr. Stacy Williams – Instructional Support Team Training. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

The board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

#### **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

##### **Student Code of Conduct Policy #5300**

Revisions to this policy are focused on the student dress code. Board members have expressed concerns with other parts of the policy. However, at this time, anticipating board approval at the August 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, the changes are limited to the dress code.

- In looking at the issues that come before the board over the course of the year, issues around student attendance, school safety, student disruption, guidance, detention and suspension of students, all of them connect to what the Code of Conduct is aiming to do. I would look forward to structure more time in a more deliberate fashion, throughout the course of this year, to look at aspects of the Code of Conduct to see if it is serving the district well. Also, including more definitive information about the responsibilities of everyone for bringing about a school environment that we hope to achieve.
- Future reviews should include broader input from parents, staff, teachers, students and administrators in consideration of changes to the Code of Conduct. Also, internal tracking data should be part of the consideration.
- Input from board members relative to areas that they would like particular review.

Board members agreed that in addition to moving this policy forward for approval, the previously mentioned suggestions would be taken into consideration by the district as part of the next review of this policy.

**Extracurricular Activity Code of Conduct Policy #5290**

The policy was presented for discussion. In response to public comments, the superintendent noted this policy is not intended to replace the Athletic Code of Conduct Policy, but rather to supplement it by insuring that there is no exclusive or discriminatory attention paid to just student athletes that the Code of Conduct and the expectation for student behavior and confrontation applies to all of our students whether the extracurricular activity happens to be athletics or some other type of endeavor. This policy grew out of discussion with the board last year. It is not intended to supersede the Athletic policy, however, the district will follow up with Ms. Ryan to be sure that what is intended is actually the outcome. This policy will be presented for approval at the August 5, 2008 for approval.

- Was Ms. Ryan consulted in the development of this policy? Ms. Ryan was consulted, particularly for input on how the Athletic Code of Conduct Policy was being embraced by faculty and staff. Ms. Ryan also attended a Policy Committee meeting and provided input relative to the process and those things that need to be in place. Ms. Ryan cautioned the committee not to move forward with the broader policy because time was needed to put procedures in place. She has been part of this deliberation.
- Perhaps there could be some incorporation by reference of information about the Athletic Code of Conduct policy related to the Extracurricular Activity Code of Conduct not superseding the Athletic Code of Conduct policy. For implementation this might build in a conflict. A suggestion was made to have Ms. Ryan review this policy for conflicts.
- The key to this policy is the academic eligibility, demonstrating that you are passing your courses to be eligible for participation in an extracurricular activity. There is a much larger group of club advisors that have to be on board with this policy. There are management issues with the number of students and the number of advisors. How do you manage the eligibility issue in the high school given the number of students and the number of advisors? The tracking system was designed to keep track of the students who are involved and the number of students in the extracurricular clubs are seasonal or for short durations of time. They may be for one particular project or activity and not a sustained daily kind of attendance. The major pieces are the attendance and making sure that students are in attendance and the other piece is ensuring that the clubs are complying with the general regulations and procedures for extracurricular activities. Advisors have been part of the process of developing this policy.

This policy will also be on the August 5<sup>th</sup> agenda for action.

**BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No reports.

**BOARD MEMBER ITEMS**

The Board President advised he has been receiving multiple inquiries from the individuals who came forward with interest in filling the board vacancy related to whether or not the board would be appointing anyone to that position. The board has deliberated the strengths and qualifications of individuals in executive session. The board has not been able to get a majority of the board to agree on a candidate. The board is split in terms the selection criteria. The board agreed to communication to the candidates to let them know that the board has been unable to agree on an appointment and to thank them for their interest. There will be no appointment to this vacancy. The President of the Board will send a letter to the candidates on behalf of the board.

**Adjournment**

Dr. Barth made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.