



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**September 10, 2008**  
**7:00 p.m.**

**Albany High School**

**PRESENT:** William Barnette, President  
Barbara Gaffuri, Secretary  
Dr. Mark Barth  
Melissa Mackey  
Wayne Morris

Dr. Eva Joseph  
Linda Jackson-Chalmers  
Bill Hogan

**ABSENT:** Judy Doesschate

**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.
- Due to the fact that this meeting was not previously scheduled, Dr. Barth and Ms. Doesschate are unable to attend. Appreciation to those members who were able to change their schedule to accommodate this meeting. Dr. Barth arrived at 7:35 p.m.

Ms. Mackey made a motion to amend the agenda to include Public Comment following Information and Discussion. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. In the interest of time those in the audience who wish to speak were asked to raise their hands before the vote on the motion. Ms. Mackey amended the motion to include for a period of 30 minutes.

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

Motion passed.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Joseph noted apart from the Albany High School scheduling problems, opening day went smoothly at each of the other schools in the district. It is important to note that the move into the swing space of Arbor Hill Elementary School and TOAST at the Schuyler Elementary site went very well. Now that those schools are at that site there are issues that need to be addressed. Mr. Fowler and Mrs. Gaines-Harrell have done an outstanding job in accommodating this move. A focus group will meet with parents to get feedback, identify issues, and consider recommendations to improve space. Overall, the current enrollment is close to the projections. Although enrollment did not meet expectations for particular grade levels, there are some grade levels that are over in size. Typically at this time of year the district takes a careful look at enrollment and looks at classes that are oversized and those that are not fully enrolled and decisions are being made relative to staffing and resource allocations. Hackett Middle School has greater enrollment numbers than originally projected and Philip Livingston Magnet Academy is under enrolled. There were more students in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Hackett as a result of open enrollment that occurred this summer at Hackett. The district did add one teacher. However, the district will be looking at those numbers again.

Middle Schools and Harriet Gibbons are on board with schedules the first day of school. New students entering the district schools for the first time were delayed. For the most part these issues have been resolved.

The primary issue for the district is the scheduling problem at Albany High School. Dr. Joseph stated that having to cancel the first two days of schools at the high school was unacceptable. It is the basic responsibility of every school to have student schedules in place for the first day of school. There is no excuse for not meeting that expectation. For that the district apologizes to our students, our families and to staff members who have been inconvenienced. The district has been working around the clock to correct the problem. The district is continuing to work toward resolving the problems and conflicts that students may still have with their schedules. Dr. Joseph extended appreciation and thanks to those who volunteered and those that worked extra hours, particularly this past weekend. Also, thanks to the student who have been tremendously cooperative and patience, despite frustration with waiting on lines.

Dr. Joseph noted she, along with the high school administration, attended the PTSA meeting this past Monday evening and heard first hand many of the parent concerns and questions. Dr. Joseph reassured parents, community members and students that answers about how this problem evolved are being sought. The district recognized the magnitude of the problem with the scheduling very late in August. Since then the focus has been primarily on working to correct the problem as quickly as possible. First and foremost, the problem needs to be resolved so that students can attend school with their schedules. At this time, the primary focus still remains on correcting the problem. Simultaneously, to the extent possible, the district is examining matters to determine what went wrong. Dr. Joseph advised she is aware of the speculation and the rumor about technology, the software and human error. Questions and concerns expressed over these past few days would be noted and addressed within the course of the review. It is imperative that the public is assured that nothing less than a full accounting of what happened will take place in this regard with whatever did happen to insure that it never happens again. To that end it is essential that the district examine every aspect of the high school scheduling process to determine what went wrong, when it went wrong and why it went wrong so that we can make the necessary steps to change.

Dr. Diggs has been charged with leading the review. The district looks forward to the recommendations that will come forward from that investigation. Dr. Joseph also noted that she has had conversations with the President of the Power School Division of Pearson and part of the review will be meeting and debriefing with her and the Power School technicians regarding the program itself. There has also been a question of additional costs incurred as a result of the problem. Mr. Hogan is in the process of compiling that information. Dr. Joseph emphasized the importance of taking the right time to do the kind of review that is essential to address the cause of the problem. It will be done timely enough so that the district can assured quality process and a process that is effective in yielding a product that the district wants throughout the school year in anticipation of the next school year.

Regular classes have been running since Monday at Albany High. Guidance counselors are available in their offices to assist student's scheduling issues. Some schedules are still incomplete. They might have a hole and some have a conflict. Right now all students attending Albany High School have schedules. Students who are new registrants to the district and now have registered new to Albany High have more of a delay than anticipated. Ms. Ferlazzo is in the process of identifying the level of impact and working out a process to get those students scheduled as soon as possible.

Dr. Joseph advised the primary issues at this time are still some gaps in student schedules. There are also a number of class conflicts. There are some large class sizes and the instructional supervisors in the core areas are working with the high school administration to resolve those issues. In the near future a thorough plan for what the district needs to do to follow up, remediate any problems and move proactively forward in a preventive manner will be developed. The district looks forward to the results of the review and the recommendations that can be brought forward to the board. Dr. Joseph again extended deepest appreciation to students and families. Despite frustration they have continued to demonstrate consideration and cooperation and that has been tremendously appreciated.

Mr. Barnette advised the board last met on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. A lot has happened since then and board members agreed that it was important for the board to have this opportunity to hear a report from Dr. Joseph and for board members to ask questions and have a dialogue and that was the purpose of tonight's meeting.

- What is the district doing for those students who might not have a full schedule of courses and do not have a high level of guidance?

A process will be put in place to review schedules, particularly new students to the high school.

- In the past staff used to do scheduling manually. If there was a problem why wasn't past practice considered? Have we ever done trial scheduling on this software? Were there no red flags from previous runs with this software?

Each of those questions may be part of what the district will be reviewing. When the district realized there was a major problem, that the schedule actually had to be rebuilt, it wasn't until well into the very last week of the summer. It's not unusual when schedules are being run that there might be some type of technical issue. At this point staff felt the technical issue could be resolved. Following additional review, it became evident that it was a major issue. Every effort was made to solve the problem quickly before the start of school. If manual scheduling had been an option, certainly those people who were rebuilding on the technical end would have given that some consideration. The year that the district migrated from Win School to Power School the old software was used to do the scheduling. Last year was the first year that the district used Power School. Trial runs were built into the schedule. However, as some of the issues evolved over the summer, there were delayed deadlines. Why those trial runs did or didn't occur will be part of the review.

- Parents were told that schedules would be out some time in August. When the schedules were not ready in August, there was no notification to parents.

In the future there needs to be a better plan for assessing what the difficulty is and having a plan to notify parents about what is going to happen. Parents were very anxious not knowing that when their child would have a schedule.

- At this point are the majority of scheduling issues resolved?  
Every student has a schedule and many have had their schedules corrected. However, there are still some a number of students who are working through conflicts and gaps in their schedules.

- Is the process that they should report to the media center when they have conflicts and is there still a considerable wait?

As of today, students are going to their guidance counselor's office. There are long waits.

While we recognize that this has been an unacceptable situation, it was not in any way predictable. The district needs to complete the review to determine if it was predictable and where assurances can be put in place so that it does not happen in the future. Thank you to the faculty and staff and the guidance department for the countless hours they have spent in trying to resolve the issue.

- When would you anticipate the report on the review to the board?

There are a number of follow-up steps. The most important thing is to be thorough. A date will be presented to the board.

- As you have been doing, continue to keep board members aware of the status and the actions that are being taken to resolve conflicts to get students back into a learning environment and continue to include those updates to board members.

Absolutely.

- Parents pointed out that while student learning did start later than planned. How can, if at all, the board assist and are there resources issues or policy issues that the board needs to address to support to make sure that the students are not disadvantaged. Similar to that are there resources or decisions or approvals that are needed from the board to support the guidance department to get this done? If so, please bring them forward so the board can discuss and decide.

The two days of instruction have been scheduled for Election Day, November 4, 2008 and March 27, 2009. These were previously scheduled as Superintendent Conference Days. High school students will be in class on those days and activities scheduled at the other schools will be reviewed to accommodate these changes. Instructional supervisors who lead the curriculum and instructional programs work very closely with the faculty at the high school will raise the issue of standardized testing as something for review to identify recommendations that may be brought forward.

- If there are 40 days of instruction before a test is given, parents concerns is that now there will be 38 days of instruction before that test is given. Parents are concerned that the students have lost those two days, even though they are going to get the days back, the two days of instruction didn't happen before the test and what kind of support could the district provide so that the students are adequately prepared in terms of instruction days and time before that point.

The teachers are in charge of tests given in class and they would make that adjustment themselves. Supervisors will be responsible for determining what supports for teachers working with students toward those tests might need.

- How many people are involved in this process? How does this work?

It all happens at the building. Scheduling takes place at each individual school. They have their process, their teams, their staff involved in building and developing their schedules. The software program is shared among schools. Mr. Cioffi advised that the schedules are built at the building level. The program itself is available for staff to use. On the building level they will develop the core selections, the teachers, classroom selection and then that information is put into the program. The program develops a schedule. The technical side of it is to make sure that the program itself works. That it does the things it's supposed to do and support the buildings when they go through the process. If they run into a glitch where they are entering the child and for some reason the server freezes up, they will call and say "all of a sudden I can't get into my program right now" it's the technical side that supports that end of it.

- Do we have the right software and did we get the proper training for Power School? Those are legitimate questions. It's really important that we find out what the real cause is. It may be technology. It may be software. We need to look at everything very carefully, the technology, the software, the human aspect or the workforce aspect of it.

### **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

Members of the public were afforded the opportunity to express their concerns and frustration related to the scheduling issue. There was no response to public comment.

### **Adjournment**

Ms. Mackey made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.