



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
November 19, 2009
7:00 p.m.

Myers Middle School

PRESENT: Melissa Mackey, Vice President
Judy Doeschate, J.D., Secretary
Dr. Mark Barth (arrived @ 8:30 p.m.)
Rose Brandon
Daniel Egan
Wayne Morris

Dr. Raymond Colucciello
Dr. Tresa Diggs
Bill Hogan
Linda Jackson-Chalmers
Linda Rudnick

EXCUSED: Barbara Gaffuri, President

In the absence of Mrs. Gaffuri, Ms Mackey chaired the meeting.

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

- Kathy Ryan, Athletic Director, introduced the members of the Girls Swim Team. Members of the team were co-champions in the Aqua League. Catherine Gibbons introduced members who were present, Jenna Clark, Sarah Chamberlain, Esther DeGannes, and Brooke Longstaff thanked the board for taking the time to acknowledge the team and their accomplishments. Dr. Colucciello noted that along with being outstanding athletes, these are outstanding students.
- Gloria Savino, Instructional Supervisor for Magnet, Art, Music and Foreign Language, introduced Christopher Bangert-Drowns, a music student at Albany High School who entertained the group by playing Brahms Rhapsody in D Minor. Christopher is a former member of the Empire State Youth Orchestra. He is also an accomplished violinist. Christopher was recently invited to play at 70 Beekman Street in Saratoga.
- Mr. Hogan distributed pictures of menu choices that will be available students with the new food service vendor. The program will start in January.
- Ms. Kim Wilkins, Principal of Myers Middle School, introduced members of the Student Government Association at Myers Middle School. Meaghan Campbell, Jah-Heem Lawitz and Marshay Richardson spoke about their part in the Student Government Association. A video of activities and students at Myers, which was shared with students coming into the school as new students, was shown to those present.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no speakers.

INFORMATION ITEM

Middle School Assessments

Principals from Myers Middle School, North Albany Academy and Hackett Middle School, reviewed their assessment results, data and their vision for their schools. Principals reported on ELA results as well as Mathematics, Social Studies and Science information. Information related to attendance and suspension rates were discussed as well as some of the primary initiatives that are ongoing in the community.

- Are there computers in the classroom for each student at North Albany Academy?
No. However, the computer lab and the library have computers for the students, along with station in the rear of the elementary classrooms. We are working closely with the Technology Department to upgrade computer software. There is also the public library next door for resources.

- How many students did you receive from Livingston? Twenty–thirty students.
- What do you need to reach your goals and what are you willing to give up, given the current budget situation?

North Albany - Upgrade of Internet Technology- Maximize enrollment

Myers – Increase efficient utilization of current resources, increase RAMS on laptops - Nothing

Hackett – Time in schedule for teachers to share information – Nothing

- Do you have specific strategies in place to reduce the number of suspensions? All three middle schools are looking at data to determine where the suspension is happening, who are the students involved, what time of day are these incidents occurring, whether or not these are special education students, etc. in order to develop steps toward reducing those numbers. Also, the schools are attempting to teach the positive, and the tiers of intervention that go along with that. In response to extending the school day, that is very important, the schools are trying to use existing resources. In addition, there are preliminary classes scheduled at the start of the day in music and art and club activities after the school day. There are programs until 5:30 p.m., working in tandem with partners to lengthen the school day at each of the middle schools.

Dr. Colucciello noted success in the classrooms reduces suspensions significantly. Principals throughout the district are looking for new strategies for changing behavior without suspension.

Staffing Report

The Board of Education heard a comprehensive report on staffing, reflecting overall staff reductions over the past 4 years, specifically the 102 positions eliminated in the 2009-2010 budget, that impacts the district's staffing profile. As the district has increased the percentage of minority staff members, with the elimination of positions, overall this figure has remained flat at 28%. This figure is in line with the City population, which is 30%. This figure is expected to change with the new census next year. The district is meeting its diversity goals related to the City and overall employment rate. Mr. Colucciello noted that his experience in other neighboring school districts indicated that the Albany School District was able to attract more minority candidates because of its diversity and urban atmosphere. The district does have to do better, but this district does better than other neighboring districts in recruiting minority candidates.

- When we look at minority staff and faculty at the elementary school level the single digit numbers of minority teacher and faculty are at the Magnet schools, Montessori, ASH, TOAST, New Scotland Elementary and Sheridan Prep. We might want to look at that. There are a number of variables, one of which is that those schools have the more stable staff so there was not the number of openings as frequently as some of the other schools where you can target particular schools with some of the new applicants that the district supports for diversity purposes.

- On the secondary level there are single digit numbers for Myers Middle School. Does the same issue apply?

When this school was created the district initially requested interest from teachers in the middle schools. Surprisingly, teachers at Livingston wanted to stay at Livingston. Most of the teachers that chose to come to Myers were teachers from Hackett.

Dr. Barth arrived at 8:30 p.m.

Pre-K Enrollment

Linda Rudnick and Melissa Hastings, Early Childhood Coordinator, gave a presentation on the Pre-K enrollment. The presentation included the current status of the Universal Prekindergarten programming for the district, enrollment information, operational costs, projected changes, random selection, the elimination of transportation for UPK students, creation/redistribution of programs, final preparations including a public awareness campaign and a Pre-K fair in early March 2010. There are mandated changes to the enrollment protocol as dictated by the State Education Department. The district is required to hold a lottery for all Pre-K seats beginning in 2010. There must be only one lottery for UPK. All Magnet seats will be drawn in the UPK lottery and not in the Magnet lottery.

- In light of reduced enrollment and the impact of charter schools, should the district be looking at one location for pre-k classes to reduce the cost of transportation?

Preliminary discussions related to this possibility have taken place. Ms. Hastings commented that this would be beneficial to students and teachers in terms of professional development and building a Pre-K team. This could be a conversation when looking at the buildings in the district and making decisions related to placement of programs.

- The impact on neighborhood schools is of concern. Has any decision been made as to whether somebody who is enrolled in the lottery in Pre-K elementary neighborhood school would then have a slot for kindergarten and what does that mean in terms of the enrollment of all of our neighborhood schools?

If a child gets into the Magnet lottery, the Magnet lottery would allow that child to remain in that school throughout his/her elementary career. The district will encourage families to enroll in their neighborhood schools. There are only a few children who are open-enrolled.

- How many community members have been involved in the discussions of the options?

Parents have not been involved in any of the preliminary discussions of a Pre-K center. There are several months remaining for parental input regarding process and what role the parent would play in the process.

- The regulation states the district has to conduct a lottery. Any lottery is going to run the risk of saying, there are 36 seats in this particular neighborhood, we have more children than we have seats, some students are going to be closed out of that school. The issue now becomes, after the lottery says this is where you are going, what happens in subsequent years? If I live three blocks from Pine Hills, my pre-K is lotteried in ASH, am I going to be given the option of staying with ASH for the remainder of elementary school or can I request that my child returns back to the neighborhood school? The issue is where the child goes to kindergarten. Additional information related to this issue will be presented to the board in the future. Also, how do we involve parents in this discussion and sibling preference is part of this discussion.
- What is the decision date on this issue? That decision should be scheduled for late January.
- Is the district required to conduct a lottery no matter what or is the district only required to do a lottery if there are more children than the district can serve?

The district has to do a lottery based on census data.

- A suggestion was made not to couple this with kindergarten and higher grades because of time.

Public Comment

1. Alex Streznewski noted an issue with different start times at the elementary level. There was also a question related to Magnet funding. In recent years the Magnet money has been collapsed into foundation aid by the state. In essence Magnet money and General Fund has been merged together. The district continues to code Magnet money in the General Fund to substantiate where the money is.
2. Nolene Smith stated that Pre-K should be considered a separate item similar to daycare. Pre-K programs should be placed in those schools where children are most needy. We need to get to a place where Magnets are not special schools.
3. Maya Batiste asked for clarification of the requirement from SED regarding the lottery. Does this eliminate neighborhood schools for Pre-K across the state? The district is not able to register kids on a first come- first serve basis for Pre-K. By conducting a lottery all parents are given the opportunity, through an application process, access to Pre-K.

ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS

Routine Consent Items were presented as follow: Proceedings of Meetings: October 6, 2009 and October 15, 2009; Appointments (Miscellaneous); Creation of Position; Leave of Absence Corrections; 403-b Resolution and Field Trips and Resolution to Appoint Hearing Officers. Ms. Doesschate made a motion to approve routine consent items. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. Mr. Egan set aside proceedings of October 15, 2009.

The board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the motion absent the item set aside.

Motion passed.

Proceedings of October 15, 2009 were presented for approval. Mr. Egan made a motion to approve. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion. Mr. Egan noted the first sentence on page 6 should be deleted. Changes will be made to the final version.

The board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION ITEM

2010-2011 Budget

The Board of Education heard a presentation on the 2010-2011 budget. Dr. Colucciello reviewed the budget development calendar, noting that the board will be discussing academic goals and objectives at the 12-01-09 board meeting. The board will be discussing a budget ten times before the vote on May 18, 2009. In addition, the Audit Committee will also be discussing the budget at their regular meetings. Dr. Colucciello noted that all board meetings following the reorganization meeting in January will be Thursday meetings.

At this point there are number of unknowns related to the budget:

- The deficit reduction plan proposed by the Governor
- State Aid figures
- The cost of Charter Schools

All budget deliberations will be based on planning for the worst and hoping for the best. The district also does not know what State Aid will be. The cost of Charter Schools is also unknown.

Mr. Hogan revised the budget planning process. The budget will evolve over the next few months taking into consideration new information that becomes available, assumptions that may change and number changes. Preliminary budget planning is based on the assumption of a zero-increase budget for 2010-2011 and possible reductions of \$10-12 million and staff reductions of up to 100. The district will focus on right-sizing, maintaining effective current programs, keeping in mind that the current fiscal crisis dictates significant budget reductions. Programs will be reviewed based in whether they are essential, essential but not mandated or elective programs. The utilization of buildings will also be reviewed along with staff scheduling efficiencies at the secondary level and in special subject areas at the elementary level. Lastly, delivery of services to special education students will be reviewed.

New cost saving initiatives are in progress through food services, prescription drug coverage, Medigap coverage, the sale of the ALC building and reductions in staff during October. Mr. Hogan reviewed the cost saving initiatives implemented last year. The next steps include following the budget development calendar, staff meetings in November and December, board updates, presentations and budget meetings, Audit Committee involvement, communication with community groups and district via website, monitor daily State-Aid outlook, lobby for equity in funding through professional organizations, follow-up with bargaining units on options.

- Is there consideration of reducing energy costs? The net loss of one child going to charter schools is approximately \$12,000. Is that correct?

Yes. However, if that student returns to the district the district gets back approximately \$9,000.

- If the students at New Covenant were to return to the district that would be approximately \$3.9 million. The district could wipe out that \$10 million shortfall by getting back 1,100 kids from the charter schools, which about one-third of their population. Whose job is that to recruit and retain those families?
- Last year the district received an additional \$1 million. We have to make sure our legislators know that is an additional \$1 million the district has to come up with this year.
- We have an obligation to educate the children in this district and a zero growth budget does not provide the resources to be successful.

- When the district is looking at operating cost for the buildings in the district is there some way to quantify them to compare across buildings in a standardized format for a reference point in future discussions? Additionally, if the administration has suggestions regarding utilization of space in the district that would also be helpful in those discussions.
- Relative to charter schools, in addition to finding a way to get the legislature to understand that the continued proliferation of charter schools in this district is detrimental to the students who are still in this district, the other part is to insure that we are providing everything that students need to be successful. The reality is that we have a Commissioner of Education at both the State and Federal level and a President who say that they support charter schools. The district has to look to see that we are doing all that we can with the money that we have to educate students.
- Board members have agreed that if they have questions regarding the budget, all board members should be included in the communication so that everyone is up-to-date on information.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Policy Committee

Dr. Barth referenced materials from the NYSSBA Convention he attended in October. Dr. Barth distributed information on Board Accountability for consideration. Dr. Barth talked about the process of reviewing and developing policies, expressing concerns related to the schedule presented by NYSSBA. The Policy Committee was unable to conduct a formal meeting due to attendance. Dr. Barth noted discussion with those present at the meeting centered around the process of policy review. Continued discussion indicated the Policy Committee is scheduled to meet on December 8, 2009. Also there was general consensus by the board that the process would go forward as recommended by NYSSBA and that this process would be monitored to determine the success of the process in reviewing the volume of policies the district has. Based on discussions this evening the question was raised whether or not board members are interested in looking at the process presented by NYSSBA. A question was raised regarding protocol. This item is for the purpose of committee reporting. The issue was returned to the members of the Policy Committee for consideration.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Mr. Egan requested a future agenda item to discuss contracting services with a professional fund raiser for the district. There was concern relative to consideration of this item at the same time as the district is developing the budget for 2010-2011. A suggestion was made to forward this item to the next Audit Committee for consideration.

Ms. Doesschate advised the Charter School Group met this past week. The group discussed the ways the district can compete with Charter Schools and what data is available. The group will meet again on Monday, November 23, 2009 at Albany High School at 5:00 p.m. In response to a question regarding the involvement of the Mayor's Office, Ms. Doesschate advised that several staff members from the Mayor's Office are part of this group.

Ms. Mackey advised she attended a meeting of the Gun Violence Task Force. Ms. Mackey distributed copies of the recommendations, unanimously supported by the members of the Task Force. A Steering Committee, Ms. Mackey, Lieutenant Harry Corbitt and John Coutro reviewed the document and started to assign tasks to the committee members. There three specific recommendations 7-14 & 16 that deal with the schools. Those are issues around getting data on the existing after school and gang prevention programs/violence prevention programs in the district, the possibility of using school buildings later in the day and other data collection around the districts alternative education program. At this point legislation requires that the implementation team presents a report to the Common Council two times a year, the first report expected in December, which will be a collection of what is currently being done. The board member item is an agenda item for discussion of the school related recommendations and how the district will go about working with the implementation team. The discussion will also include the possibility of bringing the charter schools into this group. The majority agreed to this item.

Adjournment

Dr. Barth made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 p.m.