



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
January 20, 2011
7:00 p.m.
New Scotland Elementary School

PRESENT: Dan Egan, President
Rose Brandon, Vice President
Barbara Gaffuri, Secretary
Felicia Green
Edith Leet
Melissa Mackey
Alexandra Streznewski

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

ABSENT: None

Call to Order:

- Meeting was called to order at 7:05 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

Mr. Greg Jones, Principal of New Scotland Elementary School, presented The Board an Energy Star Plaque from the New York State Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA), recognizing the District for their efforts in the use of energy saving products and systems in the renovation of the school, making it an Energy Star building. Mr. Jones will display the plaque at the school.

Mr. Shawn Hamlin, former Architect for the District, at the request of Assemblyman McEneny, through the Exploration Program at Albany High School, constructed a model of the proposed Convention Center for the City of Albany. Mr. Romanchak, who oversees the Exploration Program introduced Ali Attiyah and Zachary Mantica. Unfortunately Zachary was unable to be present due to his participation in a sports event. Nadir Haider, also a student in the Exploration Program was present to support Ali. Mr. Romanchak gave an overview of the Exploration Program. The model will be unveiled at City Hall in the near future and will remain on display in the rotunda for public viewing.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Charles Parmalee addressed the Board regarding the changes in student admission to the Honors Program in the school in terms of how courses will be taught, academic pacing and support services.
2. Elaine DiMase, a parent member of the Parent Advocacy Subcommittee of the High Restructuring Committee, addressed the Board regarding the Honors Program. Ms. DiMase noted her concern about the changes being proposed for the Honors Program in terms of requirement, teaching tools, etc. Another issue to be considered is disruptive students in the classrooms.

3. Mark Kittel addressed the Board regarding the information that has been presented to the public regarding the changes in the Honors Program. Mr. Kittel is concerned about the supports that teachers will have to deal with teaching the wide range of students in these classes. Additionally, one issue related to the lottery process and what would happen if all the students get into their preferred academy and the diverse mixture is not attained through this process.
4. Chris Parker addressed the Board regarding the high school restructuring. Mr. Parker encouraged the District to maintain a strong Honors Program. Colleges look at the integrity of these programs.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Routine Consent items were presented for approval as follow: Appointments (Teaching Assistants, Civil Service, Miscellaneous, Coaching 2010-2011, Tutors 2010-2011); Leaves of Absence; Retirements; Resignation/Vacated; Creation of Positions; Corrections; Bid Awards (Capital Area-Professional Consultant, School Development Association-Development Services; Center for Secondary School Re-design-Professional Educational Consultant and Ann Trier-Master Schedule Consultant); Resolution to Approve Superintendent's Contract and Authorization to Enter Into Contracts. Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to approve Routine Consent. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. Ms. Streznewski asked that Miscellaneous Appointments be set aside.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve routine consent items
absent Miscellaneous Appointments.

Motion passed.

Ms. Streznewski made a motion to approve Miscellaneous Appointments. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. The listing for Modified Head Basketball Coach – North Albany Academy appears to be incorrect in that the figure should be stated as a stipend.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve Miscellaneous Appointments as corrected.

Motion passed.

INFORMATION

Individualized Education Diplomas (IEPs)

Ms. Debbie Sharpe, Director of Special Education gave a very comprehensive presentation on Individual Education Diploma (IEP). Ms. Sharpe introduced Katie Nagel, School Psychologist at Abrookin, Joey DiPiazza, Special Education Teacher and Jennifer Felt, Transition Coordinator. The presentation included diploma options, a description of an IEP Diploma; IEP Diploma Designation; Current IEP Diploma Designees vs. Grade Level Enrollment; Percentage of High School Students Designated to Receive IEP Diplomas; Students with Disabilities IEP Diplomas Awarded 2005-2010. Ms. Nagel spoke about the characteristics of IEP Students and SED recommendations related to IEP Students, District IEP Program offerings. Ms. Felt spoke about transition services, community organizations, agencies and resources. The presentation ended with a listing of local employers who employee graduate students with IEP Diplomas.

- What kind of post-secondary education options are available to students who have IEP Diplomas?

Hudson Valley Community College and other NYS community colleges will accept IEP Diploma students. In order to receive financial aid they will have to pass an entrance test. If they do not pass that exam they will have to pay. Upon completion of that program they are accepted into the college.

- What are you defining as the severe disabilities?

IEP students have varying disabilities.

- What role does behavior play?

Behavior is one characteristic.

- A decision about a diploma should not be made early in the student's career.
- How often is it that they have a designation and they decide they want to go to college?

In 9th grade it's not too late. Many students have not been successful. Mandates include attendance and meeting their IEP goals.

- In 2010 how many students received IEP Diplomas?

44 Students received IEP Diplomas and 35 received Local Diplomas.

- What role does behavior play in the designation of an IEP Diploma?

Behavior is one characteristic. The student has to have to have the cognitive delays in addition to the behavior.

- We need to collect data regarding students who graduate with IEP Diplomas.
- How often is it that the student has a designation in 9th grade and the student decides he wants to go to college?

There have been students who have been placed back in the Regents track. Unfortunately, those students have tried the Regents track and have come back to IEP because they were not successful. After 9th grade they lose the opportunity to get those Regents and course credits. There are students who receive an IEP Diploma who come back to school for more job skills. These students are able to attend school until they are 21 years of age.

- Do all students with Special Education designations get an IEP?

All Special Education students get an IEP Program. Not an IEP Diploma. Special Education students can get a local diploma.

- Is the 24 Hour program at Hudson Valley at the cost to the student?

Yes.

- Are there students on an IEP track who do not meet the goals of their IEP Program?

Goals are written annually so that a student would meet those goals. If the student is not able to meet the goals, the IEP is adjusted.

Dr. Colucciello noted the District, as well as other districts, needs to reduce the number of students designated as Special Ed. Response to Intervention (RTI) needs to be looked at seriously. One measure is how many students were declassified this year. Also, Albany High School has been designated as a School in Need of Intervention based in part to the graduation rate. That needs to increase significantly. Student accomplishments can be noted on student transcripts.

Grants Update

Eileen Leffler, the District's Grants Administrator presented the Board with an update of activities in the Grants Office. The presentation included 2010-2011 Goals & Objectives, including the development of a Grants Advisory Committee, development of a Needs Assessment for the Committee, development of a Long Range Plan, improve communication and processes for grant implementation and oversight and the exploration and creation of grant database options. Ms. Leffler continued with information related to the approved School Improvement Grant Albany High School, the Race-To-The-Top pending grant and the Extended School Day/School Prevention Grant, Grants in Progress, Grant proposals announced for consideration, upcoming Grant announcements to consider and possible Research Grants. An outline of the Grants Advisory Committee was also presented for consideration.

- Will there be parents and students included in the membership of the Grants Advisory Committee?

They will be included.

Budget Update

Mr. Hogan presented an overview of the upcoming budget development process. Budget information will be forthcoming in the next several weeks. There will be many changes and assumptions. There are many unknown factors at this point in time. The current budget is \$4 million less than 24 months ago. There have been considerable cuts in the District this past year. Preliminary budget planning assumes a zero-increase in 2011-2012, the possibility of a 5% - 6% problem in terms of total budget, possible budget reductions of \$10 - \$12 million and possible staff reductions could number up to 120.

There are many negatives factors impacting revenues including the unprecedented fiscal crisis in New York State with a projected budget shortfall of \$10 billion for next year, school districts will face flat or declining State-Aid, probable school tax cap of 2% and the expiration of ARRA Stabilization Aid, Title I, and IDEA. Areas of rising costs in the school budget are staffing costs, mandated pension costs are scheduled to increase 38%, health insurance costs escalating by 10% and Charter school tuition rate increase of 20%. There is the possibility that the District will receive mandate relief and the Federal Jobs Bill monies will be rolled into next year that could reduce staff cuts.

Mr. Hogan reviewed cost savings initiatives over the past 24 months, the District revenue stream and expenditures for 2009-2010. The next steps in the budget development process, based on the Budget Development Calendar will include Board updates, presentations at Board meetings and Budget meetings, communication with community groups and the District website, monitoring State-Aid and mandate relief items and Lobbying for additional funding/mandate relief.

- Cost savings initiatives also include the freeze of salary increases for the superintendent, cabinet members and administrators. Additionally employees over the years have been paying increasingly been paying a portion of their health insurance. This Board has been fiscally responsible in cutting staff four times this past year.

- Is the Charter School tuition rate in addition to the most recent figure?

The increase from \$11,712 to \$14,072 is the 20% increase. The rate could be higher.

- How are grants indicated in the budget?

Grant monies are separate from the General Fund monies. The grant portfolio for the District is generally \$20 million. Grant funding requires the District to do new spending through new programs and positions. Those funds cannot be used to balance the General Fund budget.

- There is the possibility looking at different options for healthcare funding accounts, i.e. health reimbursement account or healthcare savings account.

Discussions are Executive Session items. The District has an insurance committee consisting of members from all the bargaining units. The District is working with vendors. The group continues to look at options.

- The District's Citizen's Budget Advisory Committee met recently. There were 15 community members present. These people will serve as a connection to the community as the District goes through the budget process.

- Last year the budget presentation was done in tiers. Will that process remain in place?

Staff reductions were presented last year in tiers. Based on the pleasure of the Board this process will continue.

- Are Grant Funds included in the financial statements?

No. Financial statements reviewed by the Board are General Fund statements.

Mr. Egan urged those present to contact their Legislators relative to budget cuts and also a freeze on Charter School tuition.

Policy Review

Additional policies related to Special Education were presented as follows:

- 4321.2 Appointment & Training of Qualified Personnel ...
- 4321.4 Confidentiality of Educational Records...
- 4321.10 Hiring and Training of Qualified Personnel
- 4321.11 Participation in State and District-wide Assessments...
- 4321.12 Universal Design Policy
- 4321.13 Appointment of Surrogate Parent
- 4321.15 Least Restrictive Environment
- 4321.16 Appropriate Space for Special Education Programs
- 4321.17 Independent Educational Evaluations
- 4321.18 Reimbursement for Travel To and From Residential Programs
- 4321.20 Services and Supports for Students with Disabilities
Attending Non-Public Schools
- 4321.21 Child Find Policy
- 4321.22 Section 504 Policy & Procedures

Following clarification of a number of items, minor changes will be made to policies, none of which will change the context of the policies. Policies will be presented at the next meeting for approval.

- What is the description of a student under Section 504.

This policy provides access to education. These are students who may have an circumstance that requires assistance in getting to classes, books in braille, taking tests, etc., not students with disabilities. This is different from students with disabilities.

Innovation Grant

The District has been involved in a partnership with NYSUT and the American Federation of Teachers sponsored Innovation Initiative Grant. Administrators and teachers from five districts around the state, along with representatives from higher education and the State Education Department were invited to NYSUT to work cooperatively on creating teaching standards and an evaluation system as a model that could be replicated in districts around the state. Jim Grove, the Innovative Initiative Site Coordinator, gave an overview of the initiative. The system will be piloted Myers Middle School and Delaware Community School will be a pilot site this year with four teachers at these schools. Evaluators will be attending certification process. The evaluation cycles will take place over the spring. NYSUT will hold additional training during the summer to increase certified evaluators. SED currently has a task force in place on teacher evaluation. This is anticipated that evaluation will move to a professional conversation and reflection model of evaluation. Student growth will not be included in the pilot.

High School Restructuring

Dr. Diggs advised members of Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA), who are providing consulting services on the high school restructuring project, will report at the next Board meeting relative to how they have supported the District since last summer and how they will be supporting the project in the future. Also, based on his availability, Mr. White will attend the next Board meeting to answer questions related to the Lottery. If he is not available, he will provide a written explanation of the lottery process. Board members will be notified so they can submit questions for Mr. White prior to the meeting.

Ms. Getto provided an update on the high school restructuring related to site visit by the State Education Department on December 14, 2010, focused on the School Improvement Grant. The Family Engagement Coordinator, School Improvement Coordinator, District Collective Bargaining, Curriculum Maps and Pacing Guides, Data, AIS Plans, School Climate, Data, SPED, Communication and CASDA. The District did not receive a formal letter. However, SED did send a letter indicating those points still needing work. The District will respond to the letter. Ms. Getto reviewed each of the topics, providing the status and upcoming activities that will address these issues. The State representatives have been very helpful and willing to partner with the District in this project.

The Family Engagement Coordinator position has been posted and interviews will be coordinated. The School Improvement Grants Coordinator position has been filled with a projected start date in February. Collective Bargaining - a District team will the AFT Conference for Persistently Low Performing Schools. No further discussions have taken place related to the teachers' agreement. Curriculum Maps and Pacing Guides, all curricula has been "burned" to DVD. Data - data from benchmarks have also been "burned to DVD". Staff is learning how to monitor and understand data. District: AIS Plan has expired. The District will use the framework, visiting innovative AIS programs, looking at APEX remediation and unite recovery. School Climate remains noisy and students are tardy to class. The District is looking to do a School Climate Survey at the College of St. Rose.

Dr. Diggs noted an updated course offering was included in the agenda packet. The District will continue to offer AP and IB courses. However the enrollment in these classes will be increased by allowing other students to enter into those classes. The rigor will still be in these courses. Students will be raised to that level through the provision of support services. Students will have access to all electives. Students will be scheduled into electives in the same way they presently enrolled, through the computer algorithm. If there is low enrollment in an elective, that class will not run.

Dr. Colucciello spoke about the support services to help students succeed in these courses, including summer school. In cooperation with the City, programs will be scheduled, if possible, to allow students to attend summer classes. Development of this program will be forthcoming. This will be a skill building- program so students will be prepared to go into those programs. Discussion continued including equal access for all students in the honors classes. Students at Level 2, 3 & 4 will have. Other students would not go into honor unless they had a desire to go into these classes.

ACTION

Approval of Policies

The following policies were presented for approval:

- 4321 Equal Participation for Students with Disabilities
- 4321.1 Opportunity to Participate in Pre-School Programs and Parental Consent
- 4321.3 Provision of Appropriate Special Education and Related Services
- 4321.5 Implementation of School-wide Approaches
- 4321.6 Declassification of Students with Disabilities
- 4321.7 Impartial Hearing officer Selection and Compensation
- 4321.8 Instructional Materials in Alternative Formats

Ms. Streznewski made a motion for approval. Mrs. Leet seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

BOARD COMMITTEES

The Facilities Committee met to discuss the possibility of a referendum on the May ballot seeking Excel Aid for several projects in the District. Additional information will be forthcoming to the Board regarding this matter.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Mackey made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 11:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cutting