



City School District of Albany
July 1, 2010
7:00 p.m.
Albany High School

PRESENT: Dan Egan, President
Judy Doesschate, Vice President
Rose Brandon
Edith Leet
Melissa Mackey
Wayne Morris

Dr. Raymond Colucciello
Jeffrey Honeywell
Bill Hogan
Linda Jackson-Chalmers
Linda Rudnick

ABSENT: Dr. Tresa Diggs
Barbara Gaffuri

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

Dr. Colucciello noted 428 youngsters graduated from Albany High School. In October/November the passing/failure rates were reviewed throughout the District to determine the number of students who were failing three or more courses. Approximately 200 seniors were identified in this review. The District initiated Operation Graduation. Dr. McCalla advised that counselors, teachers and supportive parents worked to assist these students to pass their courses. Through team work of teachers, staff, and parents, and the willingness of the students to do the work, 80% of that class graduated. Next year the District will begin earlier in the year to focus on failing students. Operation Gradation will begin with the 9th graders. This cohort will be followed each quarter throughout their high school experience. Everyone involved did whatever it took to bring these students to graduation. Congratulations for an outstanding graduation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Marlon Anderson addressed the board regarding the graduation and the scathing report from the State Education Department about the high school. Mr. Anderson suggested that a copy of this report be posted in every office in the District. Everyone needs to get together to get the rating from SED that this is a favorable to the District. Students are being desensitized to failure.
2. Nancy Wawrla addressed the Board regarding a discussion item on the agenda of plans for Harriet Gibbons High School prior to any discussion with staff about this item. Ms. Wawrla is concerned that decisions are being made without input from faculty and staff.

FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT

Approval of Change Orders

Change orders for the following were presented for approval:

- Arbor Hill Elementary School
- Giffen Memorial Elementary School
- Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology

Ms. Mackey made a motion for approval. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Bid Award

Mr. McMordie presented a resolution for approval of a bid award for Rochester Flooring Resource for the Albany High School Corridor Flooring Project on the recommendation of the owner's representative, Architect and the Superintendent. The scope is to replace the carpeting in the corridors. The bid award is for a vinyl composition tile, which is considerably less expensive than the rubber tile. Ms. Mackey made a motion for approval and Mr. Morris seconded the motion. Mr. McMordie advised this was discussed with the members of the Facilities Committee and they also recommend approval of this bid award.

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

Motion passed.

INFORMATION ITEM

New York State Small City School Districts'

Litigation Steering Committee Fees 2010-2011

Dr. Colucciello noted that this fee of \$25,000 relates to the Districts' participation in this lawsuit which is similar to the CFE litigation that was successful in New York City. Dr. Colucciello advised that several other school districts are recommending continued participation in this suit. While there is no guarantee of success, there is a possibility of success such as the CFE litigation. The Superintendent is recommending continued participation. Dr. Colucciello advised the District is a major component of this litigation. His recommendation is for the District to continue in this endeavor, together with other school districts. Dr. Colucciello noted that Mr. Biggerstaff was unable to attend this meeting. However, he is willing to meet with Board members for future discussion of this issue.

High School Report

Dr. Brian Howard gave a presentation to the Board regarding the Joint Intervention Team (JIT) Report for Albany High School. Dr. Howard thanked Dr. Colucciello, faculty and staff at Albany High School, along with Dr. Colucciello, Dr. McCalla, Stanley Harper, and Dr. Diggs for their cooperation in this review. Dr. Howard noted he had a public image of what he was going to find at the high school. His experience was very different. The school was safe and orderly. Students, parents, teachers, and staff members were helpful, friendly, and cooperative. A large majority of staff are dedicated to, and personally invested in the school and want to work to improve student attendance and achievement.

Dr. Howard highlighted the written report include, Introduction and Overview, Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, School Leadership, Infrastructure for Student Success, Collection, Analysis, and Utilization of Data, Professional Development and District Support. Categories included observation and recommendations.

Mr. Egan thanked Dr. Howard for the report. The District welcomes this report. It shines a bright light on this high school. It shows us that performance is not what it needs to be. It is the duty of the Board of Education to provide the leadership to bring performance up where it should be.

- I appreciate what you have acknowledged in the report related to graduation rates for African American students. How does professional development work its way down to directly impact student achievement?

The curriculum needs to be one of the first issues addressed. That is the foundation with which you will build accountability measures. Students will be measured when they enter the classroom and when they leave. The expectation is that District will see progress at the end of two years.

- Are you suggesting that administrators are assigned to function rather than location to serve the entirety of the school?

The recommendation is not for adding staff. You need to find a way for administrators to attend training and the time to address the functions they are assigned. Smaller learning communities are essential.

- Do you see public image affecting performance and what do you see the students telling us they want the most?

Most of the students want an opportunity to be successful. All the comments come back to being successful. In terms of the public image, the media is responsible for the image. The administration needs to find ways to promote the positive things about the school, perhaps the use of public TV. Albany High School is like every other high school. The District needs to develop ways to insure the public is aware of the good things that are happening in the schools.

- I see this report as a wake-up call. This is the ammunition the District can use to move forward. The overall theme of the report has to do with an administrator(s) to oversee this operation, to turn the high school around. This board is on top of the many deficits in the District.

Many things can be called professional development. The report indicates that professional development should be targeted for a number of items. It is going to be difficult. Staff should be given the opportunity to move into these keys areas and accountability is a key issue to any success.

- It is important that there is some imbedded professional development throughout the high school. The report provides excellent recommendations regarding administrative oversight. The smaller learning communities will have administrators. There are different ways this can be configured, without additional staff, this can be successful.

- Your comments about programs, listing, lack of accountability, etc. and school attendance, those are such fundamental problems. What do you attribute these to?

It has been a tradition in many schools that when you see a problem, you create programs. This is a system that sees a need and creates a program. You need to have a statement of purpose and measures, ways to support them and the ability to identify results. Most districts have difficulty in ending programs. Attendance is a very difficult problem and it is more pronounced at the high school level. Those with learning gaps avoid school. You have to have programs that keep students engaged. The community and the schools need to work together to solve the problems. This will be a difficult task.

- Comments about leadership are the most serious. Does this organization have the capacity to make the necessary changes? What does the District need organizationally?

This is not an evaluation of individuals. What is important is where people are going to spend their time. Administrators have been forced by a crisis to focus on other areas, i.e. making the school safe. Now the District needs the capacity to focus on instruction, supervision and curriculum. Those require different skills that require training and support. This is where they have to focus. The District has already been looking at how to make that shift.

Dr. Colucciello noted that there will be some changes. The administration will bring to the Board different scenarios of leadership at the high school. Looking at supervisors, those who have the skills who can be moved, and redirect their efforts next year. There are a number of retirements under the incentive. This is a window of opportunity to make changes and look move of staff. We are directing energies next year to make sure these things get done. The District is waiting for \$1.9 million that will support this. We are still waiting for the \$7.4 Magnet Grant. The District will get involved once again with SUNY. Raising student achievement is our job for next year. We have a lot to work with in this report.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Routine Consent Items were presented as follow: Proceedings of Meetings (May 20, 2010, June 3, 2010 and June 17, 2010; Appointments (Miscellaneous, Change in Assignment, Summer School 2010, Extended Day Summer School Program 2010); Retirements/Resignations; Attendance at Conferences; Field Trips; Health Services Contract; Treasurer's Report; Budget Transfers under \$10,000; Budget Transfers over \$10,000; Revenue Status Report – 05/31/10; Appropriation Status Report – 05/31/10; Real Property Tax Adjustments; Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund; Authorization to Enter into Contracts; Resolution to Approve Charter School Public Hearing, Committee on Special Education, Subcommittee on Special Education, Committee on Pre-School Special Education. Routine Consent Items also included an additional sheet of Appointments and Retirements/Resignations; Salary Correction and Rescinding the Discontinuance of Probationary Appointment, Resolutions to Approve Retirement Incentive Part A and Part B for specific personnel and a Resolution to Appoint a Hearing Officer, related to disciplinary charges against an employee. Mr. Morris made a motion for approval. Ms. Doeschate seconded the motion. It was noted that the listing, Authorization to Enter into Contracts, the figure for Government Affairs Counsel should be \$20,000.

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

Motion passed.

ACTION

Policy Approval

Ms. Jackson-Chalmers presented policy #5300 Code of Conduct for approval. Ms. Jackson-Chalmers noted that a public hearing was held prior to this meeting. There were six people who attended the hearing. Ms. Jackson-Chalmers explained the process and focus of the review by the Code of Conduct task force and the approval of the Bullying Prevention Policy #0115.1. The group was supportive of both these policies. One concern is that the policy should be less punitive and child friendly. Other concerns related to operations, that will be shared with the Superintendent and staff at another time. Ms. Doesschate made a motion to approve policies as presented. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION

Harriet Gibbons High School Plan

Mr. Egan explained that this issue is being presented for discussion based on information from the Alternative Education Think Tank. Ms. Mackey advised as part of the review of the Alternative Education Program, the group was able to review data related from the first two years of the Harriet Gibbons High School (HGHS) 9th Grade Academy. Additionally, the Principal of HGHS previously presented a proposal to expand the program to allow students in the 9th grade to remain in that setting for an additional year, so that students would better prepared for return to Albany High School. The group was not formally charged by the Board to make that decision. At the meeting of the group earlier this week, the group discussed observations and recommendations in the JIT report, had some ideas about what should happen at HGHS based on best practices. The future of HGHS should be joined in the high school restructuring noting that the JIT issues identified are in both settings. Ms. Mackey also noted that any changes to the HGHS model need to be made quickly by the Board in order to have plans in place for change in September.

Ms. Mackey noted she appreciates the comments made by faculty members of HGHS earlier this evening. Ms. Mackey stated that both she and Mrs. Brandon, as members of the Think Tank, have done their due diligence on the issue of HGHS. They have looked at the data and discussed the outcomes for students in the first two cohorts. They have visited the school to discuss the program and the challenges that were evident in this school year with Mr. Clement, and have looked at best practices. Ms. Mackey noted as an individual, not as a representative of the Alternative Education Think Tank, as a Board member, that the Board needs to rethink HGHS.

Ms. Mackey further noted that her personal preference, based on declining enrollment, because of the outcomes and because at the graduation this past weekend, of the 80 students remaining from the original 141 member cohort, 16 of them graduated. Ms. Mackey advised she personally feels that with the low number of students who are enrolled to come into this program, these students should be enrolled in Albany High School, along with the faculty and staff from HGHS. By bringing the students into the high school so they can immediately become part of the high school and partake in all the activities available after school activities and a greater coordination of programs.

The District has a history of starting programs, but has a difficult time ending them when they do not meet expectations. In this instance the District created a high need community, yet did not provide all the supports these students needed. This is a data based decision.

Board members continued discussion regarding the program and whether or not this item should be brought to action this evening. Dr. Colucciello advised the District has looked at additional support for these students. There have been preliminary discussions of different options. Dr. McCalla and Mr. Clement joined the discussion. Mr. Clement cautioned that these students need to be targeted based on their needs both academically and socially. Dr. Colucciello advised he would recommend moving this program. Discussion also included the fact that in order to amend the agenda 5 affirmative votes are necessary. Ms. Mackey made a motion to amend the agenda to include an action item. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

The Board voted 3 ayes, 1 nay (Mrs. Leet) and 2 abstentions (Ms. Doesschate & Mr. Egan)
Motion failed.

Board Member Items

Mr. Egan referred to a listing of Board member items and asked that each Board member pick three of the 15 items remaining, prioritized 1-3. Listings were forwarded to the Clerk of the Board.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Facilities Committee met to discuss the bid award for floor tiles at Albany High School that was presented this evening for approval.

The Audit Committee met to receive the Internal Audit. The major issue is the lack of a good attendance system for hourly employees.

The Policy Committee met earlier this date. Additional policies will be presented for review at the August 5 Board meeting.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Ms. Mackey advised the Gun Violence Task Force met on June 30. Assistant Police Chief, Brendan Cox is working on developing a working group to address coordinated response to with service providers for traumatic events. The purpose of the project is to identify the service providers and community members that are in a position to have a positive influence on those affected by violence, making sure that proper training is established, protocols are in place, along with notification mechanisms and defined roles. Ms. Mackey advised that she suggested that training be made available to the Home School Coordinators in the District so they will be able to respond to students coming into the schools who have experienced a trauma. Dr. Colucciello advised the District has an excellent Crisis Response Team Manual.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Mackey made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.