

**City School District of Albany**  
**September 2, 2010**  
**7:00 p.m.**  
**Albany High School**

**PRESENT:** Dan Egan, President  
Rose Brandon, Secretary  
Barbara Gaffuri  
Edith Leet  
Melissa Mackey  
Wayne Morris (left at 10:00 p.m.)

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

**ABSENT:** Bill Hogan

**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.
- The Mission Statement was read.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Mr. Lesko introduced Mr. Rob Parker from the U.S. Census Bureau who presented a plaque to the District for partnering with the Census Bureau to achieve a complete, accurate count in the decennial census 2010. The education that the District provided to the residents about the importance of obtaining an accurate count for the census was vital. An accurate count will ensure that the community will be accurately represented in Congress and will also be eligible for important community program funding. Dr. Colucciello noted through the efforts of Brian Cartwright, Instructional Supervisor for Social Studies, work was taken into the classrooms and made part of everyday programs, educating students about the census and distributing flyers to families to encourage them to participate in the count.

Mrs. Edith Leet advised that backpacks full of school supplies that are grade appropriate and age appropriate are being distributed to District students. The Focus Churches are a group of churches in Albany and Delmar that work together on community projects. This group recognizes the importance of students coming to school prepared to learn. The group has done this for several years. Extra supplies are also being donated directly to the schools. Mrs. Leet noted that 40 students receiving the backpacks are homeless students. Mrs. Leet thanked Fiona Thompson for her efforts in identifying the appropriate supplies and schools.

Dr. Colucciello noted Arbor Hill Elementary School is ready to open next week. Last-minute projects have been completed. Teachers are very excited about going into this beautiful building. Dr. Colucciello noted all the school buildings and teachers in the District are ready to accept students next week.

Mr. Morris noted that the opening of this renovated building is the completion of the Facilities Project. The Facilities Project has completed this 10-year Facilities Project in 9 years. Mr. Morris extended his gratitude and congratulations to Board members, staff, and Mr. McMordie of Armlin, Damon & McMordie, who have been with the project through the duration.

The Opening Day Ceremony for the District took place earlier this week. Several Board members were present to hear Senior Deputy Commissioner of Education, Dr. John King, who gave the keynote address. Dr. King will be assisting the District as it moves through the restructuring of Albany High School. His department, along with the Commissioner, will be working together with the District. Dr. King was very well received by the audience.

Relative to the Race to the Top, Dr. Colucciello advised that the Secretary of Education, Mr. Duncan, spent an hour with several local superintendents at NYSUT headquarters as he was on his way to meet with the Governor. The Albany Public Schools were in the forefront. Secretary Duncan talked about Race to the Top, change, and especially the innovative grant Albany teachers are working on through the leadership of the APSTA President, Cathy Corbo, to change the way classroom instruction is evaluated. Race to the Top will change things in Albany. At this point, the District has been granted \$300,000 verbally. The District had asked for \$1.79 million. The District is hopeful that as the District moves through this year additional funds will be made available through the modifications of the Joint Intervention Plan. Secretary Duncan was very complimentary to the districts that are taking on this grant. The program will be piloted in Albany this year.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no speakers.

### **FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT**

#### **Approval of Change Orders**

Change orders for Arbor Hill Elementary School were presented for approval. Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to approve the change orders. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Ms. Mackey asked for an update on a number of issues identified by Ms. Gaines-Harrell related to the opening of Arbor Hill Elementary School. Mr. McMordie advised all these issues will have been completed before the opening of school on Tuesday.

### **INFORMATION**

#### **Legislative Update**

Cynthia Shenker and Mary Ann McLean of Wilson, Elser gave a comprehensive update on their lobbying efforts on behalf of the District to change Charter School Legislation. Ms. Shenker noted the initial assignment is to get a bill passed to change the saturation of Charter Schools in Albany. Ms. Shenker noted the process is to negotiate, litigate, and, when all else fails, change the rules. Negotiation is the conversations that have taken with everyone involved, including the Charter School Institute, legislators, the Governor's Office, the Controller's Office to conduct an audit of the Charter Schools, and the SUNY Board of Trustees. The legislators voted to continue the freeze on charter school tuition. Unfortunately, the Governor vetoed the bill, not because he opposed that component but because it was the last bill he could veto in the budget process. Also, additional money has been put on the table for school aid, and there has been money taken

away through an across-the-board cut of 1%, which includes education. Finally, there is the appropriation of Race to the Top Funds that has not yet been finalized. It is perhaps the most bizarre situation across the board. The disproportionate impact on Albany is the issue. Fortunately, all these issues remain in play. Hopefully, the next time there is an opportunity to deal specifically with Albany or generically across the board, there will be calls made reaching out to the Legislature.

- Is the freeze on?

It is everyone's belief that when the Legislature comes back--and they must come back--after the primary and far enough from the General Election, they have to appropriate the money and they will approve the tuition freeze. There are no definite answers at this time.

- Are your discussions also including accountability, transparency, and best practices for charter schools?

Yes. The State Education Department (SED) is expected to institute new policies related to best practices and transparency. If SED, the entity that is charged with educating every child in the state, believes these things are necessary, the expectation is that SUNY would adopt these as well. SED is saying that things need to change. There is also legislative intent.

- On what additional issues do you think you would be helpful to the District in addition to the larger issue of the Charter Schools?

As long as we are engaged, the Board sets the agenda and priorities. Our agreement states that issues are to be decided by the Board. The more we learn, we can judge what we can and cannot do. It is a question of maximizing state revenues and minimizing expenses and everything attached to that.

- As a board member I would appreciate communication from you relative to upcoming issues that the Board should be aware of.
- It is now the Board's responsibility to talk about specific objectives and priorities in order to give the lobbyists direction.
- Perhaps a workshop for Board members might be helpful.

### **High School Curriculum Alignment**

Dr. Diggs noted the Board previously heard presentations from the Math and Social Studies Instructional Supervisors. This evening, the Instructional Supervisors for ELA, Margaret DiGiulio, and Science, Dan Stilson, will provide a presentation on the Albany High School Curriculum Pacing Map progress. Dr. McCalla mentioned the initial leadership of Mr. Harper in setting the course in this process. Dr. McCalla noted that throughout the summer he saw large groups of teachers collaborating with the Instructional Supervisors, working on these maps. This is an ongoing process that needs diligent care in terms of alignment of assessments with standards and timelines involved, as well as resources. It is a mammoth job to retool the curriculum. Most important is the regularity in looking at curriculum in a parallel manner for a complete and rapid update of all elements of the curriculum. Ms. Getto thanked Mr. Harper and Ms. Pastecki for their leadership. The Board was presented a report defining the curriculum in each subject. The report includes teaching and learning; school leadership; infrastructure for student success; collection, analysis, and utilization of data; professional development; and District support. The project is aligned with the Joint Intervention Team recommendations and is supported by learning standards, comprehensive educational plans, and collaborative efforts. Ms. DiGiulio and Mr. Stilson presented their reports.

- I am hoping that the identification of teacher weaknesses can be addressed in a timely manner. I am excited to hear about the level of enthusiasm with teachers. Teachers have expressed difficulty in teaching students who are not able to read at grade level. Also, communication to parents in addition to interim reports should include the resources available to the students for additional help.

Benchmarking quarterly should be reduced to monthly, mirroring the questioning style set forth in the Regents. That component of consistency is going to be different in this new pacing map. A common core writing process will be provided across the grades. Grading will also be consistent. Protocols around communication will also be established.

- I am happy to see that we are having standardization in curriculum. Standardization around grading is important.

Teachers who have been isolated are now collaborating in terms of reducing the disparity. They are very serious that they should come to a common delivery system, as well as a common assessment system. This issue is also being discussed by the Building Leadership Team.

- Will we still have mid-terms in Science and English?

There will be mid-terms in all subjects. That information is used in adjustments in instruction.

- How does the teaching in classroom and utilization of the textbook create the rigor necessary for students to be successful?

Assessments emulate state exams. Raising expectations is critical.

- How do we communicate this curriculum to parents?

The parent portal will be used in this process.

- There must be a systemic annual review in place.

This will be ongoing and reviewed regularly and consistently.

Dr. Colucciello noted the District has focused in the last few years on making the high school a safe environment for learning. It is now time to make students realize they can be successful. They need to believe that they will go to college. The challenge is to get students involved in this process. Also, we have to take the students from where they are. We have to get them to their grade level so they can learn. Assistance will include summer programs, extra classes, and appropriate support. By January, the indicators will be presented to the Board. Are they coming to school? Are they passing tests? The students need to believe in themselves.

- Do you feel that the revisions will result in improvement?

Administrators are using the JIT review, the talent of teachers, and the data, constantly reviewing and adjusting.

- We have to know if the knowledge of this pacing map does not get imparted to the student, we are still wasting time, moving slowly. Outside of professional development, what are we going to do differently with the teachers in the high school who are adverse to change, more specifics? Observations of classes should be unannounced.

- We need to demand excellence by going into classrooms on a daily basis, providing teachers with instructional strategies for things that are not working and being consistent. The work that the group has done directly impacts the students. The difficult conversations with staff need to take place.
- These tasks are very basic. We lack basic things that should be in place. The idea of posting attendance is positive. Power School usage goal should be established.
- Looking at teacher quality, I am concerned with those in the middle. How are you going to move the middle?

We have adequate resources to do the job. We have another important ingredient, which is the willpower and determination to do this. We have to bring the accountability down. We have to get into all teachers' classrooms. We will combine efforts, using a more analytical approach, sharing best practices, and reducing professional isolation. Rebuild excitement in a structured way in tackling student achievement and building trust, building a community of practice.

- I would encourage you to include in the planning the education of parents to become directly involved in turning this around. There needs to be someone to tell students that they believe in them and that they are going to help them. We have to change the culture of keeping parents at a distance.
- Do you provide pacing maps to tutors who work with students after school in the library? Yes, that is planned. Tutors will also be trained, using more technology in this environment.

Mr. Egan requested the agenda be changed to take up Routine Consent at this time to acknowledge administrative appointments.

### **ROUTINE CONSENT**

Routine consent items were presented as follows: Proceedings of Meetings (August 5, 2010); Appointments, (Administrators, Interim Appointment, Probationary Appointments, Reappointments, Regular Substitutes, Part-time Teachers; Miscellaneous, Summer School 2010); Leave of Absence; Resignations, Corrections, Transfers, Field Trips; Treasurer's Report; Revenue Status Report/09-10; Revenue Status Report/10-11; Appropriations Status Report/09-10; Appropriation Status Report/10-11; Budget Transfers under \$10,000 /09-10; Real Property Tax Adjustments; Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Funds; Donation; Authorization to Enter into Contracts; Disposal of Assets; Albany-Colonie Chamber of Commerce Membership, Resolution to Approve Charter School Public Hearing; Committee on Pre-School Special Education; Committee on Special Education; Subcommittee on Special Education. Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

Mr. Egan introduced Eileen Leffler, who is being appointed as the Administrator for Grants & Program Development, and Michael Panetta, who is being appointed as Assistant Principal at Albany High School.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve Routine Consent Items.

Motion passed.

### **Summer School Programs**

Ms. Rudnick presented an overview of the Summer School Program. Literacy Links ran from July 12 – August 6, 2010. Three hundred and forty (340) families were encouraged to enroll their children in the program. Two hundred and eighty nine (289) children entered the program in July. In addition to thirty-five (35) teachers, 13 students from the College of St. Rose and 35 volunteers from the City Youth Workers, recruited by Fiona Thompson, provided support to the program. The program was site-based. Program Coordinators were Jodi Commerford and

Zulieka Sánchez-Gayle. Ms. Rudnick noted that student results, at the end of the program, were very promising. Student records will be forward to the Principals and Reading staff. Ms. Rudnick noted the funding for summer school came through the Title I ARRA Funding, which will sunset this year. The District will need to budget for Summer School at the Elementary level next year.

Dr. Diggs noted the middle school and high school summer program final reports have been forwarded to Board members, along with updates. Dr. Diggs reviewed final results for the middle school program over the past three years. The report indicates a decrease in enrollment and number of students dropped due to attendance or behavior over the three-year period; it also shows an increase in students successfully completing the program and a decrease in failures from 2009-2010. The Summer School Coordinator for the elementary program was Kandie Antonetti.

Dr. Diggs advised the high school program coordinator was Mike Panetta. The program was designed to remediate credit for a course required for graduation; provide students with an opportunity to strengthen academic areas; and increase the number of students passing the New York State Regents Examination. Dr. Diggs reviewed a table indicating results for the past two years. The results show a decrease in the course enrollment, the same percentage of students passing and failing courses for both years, and a decrease in the percentage of students passing the Regents.

Dr. Diggs noted that the curriculum alignment and instructional work of the instructional supervisors and administrators must be extended to summer school to ensure that students are receiving effective instruction, teachers are using appropriate curriculum, and materials/resources are current and relevant.

- I was very disappointed by the Regents results. Overall it appears there was very little value added in offering summer school to students. These are students who were getting additional instruction for course they had already been in all year and still did not make any progress. I would like to know what students thought about these results.

Students were not surveyed. Part of the issue is student attendance. Students are not dropped from the program for lack of attendance. These are the same results as June with a different group of students. Also, a number of students take the course for extra help.

- We need to do Summer School differently. We have to make sure that it makes sense and that students receive the course contents in order to be able to pass the Regents. These courses should be treated the same as other courses.
- We need to rethink what we are doing. If a student is failing a course in January, why wait until summer school. If they can't pass the course in a full school year, how can they bring this forward in 6 weeks of intense learning. These numbers are frustrating. They are an extension of how students are being taught.

Students are not getting engaged in summer school. There were also significant numbers of students from Bethlehem and Watervliet. Tuition is \$370 per course. There were 31 out-of-district students in the summer school program. There were also additional students who took the Regents exams without attending summer school.

- There were 109 students who did pass the Regents and 29 graduates in August.

**Board Committee Reports**

The Charter School Committee met. Mr. Egan noted the Mosaic Stone Charter School application was withdrawn. There were 150 students from New Covenant enrolled in our schools. It is expected that this number will increase with the start of school.

**Board Member Items**

Mrs. Leet requested that the Student Representative be in attendance at the meetings as soon as possible and that the student should be expected to stay for the meeting to allow input into discussions. The Shared Decision Plan has had some changes that encourage parents and students to be involved.

Ms. Mackey noted that Board meetings run long and the Student Representative is a student first. Ms. Mackey recommended arranging for the opportunity to have interaction between the Board and the Student Governance as the Board moves around the District for Roundtable Meetings. Ms. Mackey recommended setting aside 30 minutes for this interaction at those meetings to give students a chance to participate in a formal Board meeting.

Mrs. Brandon suggested that the Board recognize at Board meetings students who scored 4's on the State exams. Mrs. Mackey supported this idea. Dr. Diggs suggested that certificates might be provided by the State, similar to the State of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Egan requested that responses to the Superintendent's goals be submitted as soon as possible.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, Ms. Mackey made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Brandon seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cutting