



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

August 18, 2011

7:00 p.m.

Pine Hills Elementary School

PRESENT: Dan Egan, President
Rose Brandon, Vice President
Felicia Green
Edith Leet
Melissa Mackey
Alexandra Streznewski
Dr. Raymond Colucciello
Bill Hogan
Dr. Tresa Diggs
Linda Rudnick
Ken Cioffi
Jay Girvin, Esq.

ABSENT\EXCUSED:

Linda Jackson-Chalmers

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.

Mr. Egan made a motion to amend the agenda to include two tenure appointments. Mrs. Leet seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to amend the agenda.

Motion passed.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Colucciello noted that the 2011-2012 School Calendar is now available, recognizing Mr. Lesko and his staff for the great job. The newsletter is also available for the public.

Mr. Lesko recognized two outstanding Albany High School students, Julia Steppich and Megan Murphy. These two students were finalists in the National Merit Scholarship Program. That means that they were in the top 1% of the 1.5 million students nationally who took the qualifying exam earlier in their high school careers. Since 2000, they are the 24th and 25th students from the District to receive this recognition in the National Merit and National Achievement Awards. Julia Steppich spoke about the support she received as a student at Albany High School, which has helped her on her path to medical school to become a doctor. Mary Beth Hasset Murphy, mother of Megan Murphy advised that her daughter has already left for college. Ms. Murphy expressed her gratitude for the support of faculty and support staff in the District. It does indeed take a village to raise a child.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Corrie Terry addressed the Board regarding segregation of Special Education students in the District. Ms. Torrie expressed her concern regarding this concept.

FACILITIES PROJECT

Action

Change Orders

Mr. Hogan presented change orders related to the Albany High School Renovation Project for approval. Ms. Streznewski made a motion for approval. Mr. Egan seconded the motion. Mr. Hogan noted these change orders are part of the Albany High School renovation project. The project remains within budget.

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

Motion passed.

INFORMATION

High School Redesign

Dr. McCalla, Mr. Harper, and Ms. Getto gave a comprehensive report on the Albany High School Redesign. Dr. McCalla reviewed the Building Leadership Committee Structure, the Summer Professional Development, Draft IDEA Professional Development Plan 2011-2012, Summer Priorities, Instructional Strategies 2011-2012, Instructional Monitoring Strategies 2011-2012, AVID Update, Master Schedule Update, School Climate and Culture, and the Summer Themed and Transition Camps Overview.

- What is the total number of 8th graders going into Albany High School?
- New students going into the high school total 525. The number of students who attended the summer transition camps was about 175 students. We know that the transition from 8th to 9th grade is difficult for these children. The purpose of these camps is to prepare students for this transition. How did you reach out to the students to get them into the camps?

The District reached out to every middle school, flyers were sent to every family, flyers were posted in schools, information was posted on the district website, parent meetings were scheduled and door-to-door contact was made to families through the Step Program. Recruitment Plans for next year will be reviewed.

- Are there significant points identified in the climate survey?

The physical plant stood out as a primary issue indicated by both parents and students. The strengths were the relationship between the members of the teaching staff. Focus groups, including students, will be developed to investigate concerns. An executive summary will be forwarded to Board members.

- Expectations of teachers and administrators are most important. Teacher connection with students is critical. Students need to feel that teachers believe they can be successful. We need different results in the future.
- We have a lot of metrics related to student performance, each academy and performance of staff. What is the decision cycle? How fast can the District react, should there be negative findings?

Formal data will be looked at on a five-week basis, following the interim reporting cycle.

Formative assessment and pacing maps will be utilized. Benchmarks will be looked at every ten weeks.

- How many students are enrolled in the AVID Program, what schools are they coming from, and what is planned as this program goes forward?

Presently there are 42 students who have contracts. The recommended capacity is 50. The number is expected to double next year. The site plan includes the college visits and speakers. It also involves the tutorials and the college tutors. Final numbers for each school can be provided.

- Are their special activities planned for parents during the Freshman Orientation on September 2?

Parents will be able to go through the orientation process with their freshman.

- It would be great if the District could track the transition camps and the students in the AVID program to determine the effectiveness of these programs.
- How is feedback going to be provided to teachers on a timely basis? Is there a way to identify teachers who are having problems with instruction?

Teachers will receive immediate feedback following classroom visits. Administration is available to support teachers. There will be back-up plans for those teachers who are unable to attend training.

- Has a schedule for teacher evaluation been set up? The purpose of the evaluations is to increase achievement. How is professional development impacting achievement and how is that measured? How are we measuring increased rigor, benchmarks?

The National Association for School Principals has created a national standards rigor checklist that will be used. There is also the support of the AVID program rigor rubric.

- Does the District get feedback from the regents exams on specific questions on the exams?

The District is able to get item analysis by teacher and by student. Getting the feedback to teachers is important. All exams in 2012 will be scanned.

- Is there a way that teacher's schedules can be posted on their doors so that students can see when the teacher is available for assistance?

Teacher schedules will be made available to students.

- Expectations of administrators and teachers are key. Teacher connection with students is critical.
- Timing is crucial in terms of reviewing data and getting feedback so that changes can be made to support increased achievement.

Public Comment

Nolene Smith spoke about engaging parents in the education of their children. Parents need to know they will be heard. Ms. Smith also noted the Parent Center at the high school has not yet been developed. The District needs to change the way it does business.

Dr. Malerba noted that a number of students at Level 3's and 4's attended the transition camps. The District is not reaching those students who are scoring at Level 1 and 2.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Routine Consent Items were presented as follow: Proceedings: June 16, 2011, July 7, 2011 and August 4, 2011; Appointments (Probationary, Civil Service, Miscellaneous 2010-11, Summer School 2011-12); Transfers; Leave of Absence; Resignations; Resolution to Approve New York Power Authority (NYPA) Energy Projects; Authorization to Enter Into Contracts. Mr. Egan noted the agenda was amended to include two additional resolutions under appointments. Ms. Green made a motion to approve routine consent. Ms. Streznewski seconded the motion. Ms. Green asked that the proceedings of August 4, 2011 be set aside.

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

Motion passed

Ms. Streznewski made a motion to approve the proceedings of August 4, 2011. Ms. Green seconded the motion. Ms. Green requested a change in the proceedings under Board Vacancy to indicate that she recommended that Mrs. Leet serve as the secretary of the Board. The same statement should also be included under Committee Reports.

The Board voted 5 ayes and 1 abstention to approve the motion as revised.

Mr. Egan abstained.

Motion passed.

ACTION

Approval of 2011-2012 Tax Warrant

Mr. Egan presented the 2011-2012 Tax Warrant for approval. Ms. Streznewski made a motion for approval. Ms. Green seconded the motion. Mr. Hogan advised that the end result of the zero increase in school tax levy after factoring in changes in assessments and homestead with STAR is that taxes will decrease .65%, taxes on homesteads with STAR will decrease 1.32%, and homesteads with enhanced STAR will decrease 2.45%. Homestead tax rate for September 2011 is \$19.11 per thousand of assessed value (with STAR) compared to \$19.23 in 2010. The non-homestead tax rate for September 2011 is \$26.28 per thousand of assessed value compared to \$24.32 the previous year. It is important to note that the commercial tax rate has decreased two of the past three years as a result of changes in assessments. Mr. Egan recognized the teachers, staff, and Board members for their cooperation in reaching this favorable outcome for the District.

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

Motion passed.

Resolution to Increase Tax Certiorari

Mr. Egan presented the following resolution to increase the Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund.

Resolution to Fund the Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund

WHEREAS, pursuant to a resolution of the Board under section 3651(1-a) of the Education Law, the Albany City School District established a reserve fund known as the Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund to be used for the purpose of paying judgments and claims from a tax certiorari proceeding, in accordance with Article 7 of the Real Property Tax Law; and

WHEREAS, the establishment allowed the funding of such Fund to be made from fund balance for the purpose of paying anticipated liabilities from pending Article 7 cases;

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED: The Albany City School District Board hereby transfers from the current fund balance to the Tax Certiorari Reserve Fund the amount of One Million Seven Hundred Twenty Four Thousand and 00/100 (\$1,724,000) dollars, for the payment of tax certiorari judgments and claims resulting from challenges to the 2008, 2009, and 2010 tax rolls.

Ms. Streznewski made a motion for approval. Ms. Green seconded the motion. Mr. Hogan noted the NYS Comptroller's Office has advised that the District can allocate the estimated amount of \$7.4 million excess Fund Balance in a number of ways; place it in reserves, pay-off debt, and finance one-time expenditures, or reduce property taxes. The recommendation is the pay off the \$5,676,000 bond at the high school and increase the Tax Certiorari Reserve by \$1,724 million. Currently, there are \$232.3 million of known challenges (petitions for tax reductions) to assessments which could cost the District up to \$6 million. Additional reserves would help off-set the tax impact of large settlements through the next five years.

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

Motion passed.

Resolution to Approve Expenditure of Excess Fund Balance

Mr. Egan presented the following resolution to approve expenditure of Excess Fund Balance. Resolution dated August 18, 2011, of the Board of Education of the City School District of Albany authorizing the expenditure of \$5,676,000 of excess fund balance to pay the outstanding principal balance of certain District obligations.

Ms. Streznewski made a motion for approval. Mr. Egan seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Concussion Management Policy #5410

Mr. Egan presented Policy #5410 Concussion Management Policy for approval. The policy has been previously reviewed by the Board.

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

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

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION

2011-2012 District Goals

Mr. Egan noted that the job of the School Board is not to manage the District. The job of the School Board is to set the goals and the vision, and to shape the culture of the District. The District has done that through the Strategic Plan that was adopted three years ago. That had some aspirational goals, but they were not tied in general to any time period. More recently, the District has set goals that are more concrete and more measurable, and are connected to a time expectation. There is a good governance lesson in that. If the Board sets the goals and allows the staff to do the work, checking periodically, things will be accomplished. Mr. Egan asked for input from members relative to goals for this coming year.

- Considering that the District has two schools under review, particular focus should be on those two schools, Hackett and Albany High School, for each academy. The goals should address achievement at all levels, but especially Level 1 and Level 2 students, identifying measurable achievement goals.
- Specific goals related to finance information the Board receives.
- Adopt policies stating that children who are below grade level will not be permitted to advance to the next grade level. We can't continue to have students at a Level 1 go on to the next grade level.

This policy would require academic input and community input. There are a number of schools on social promotion. Included in the policy should be the steps that would be taken to get these students off the Level 1 list. The policy should not be simply punitive, without a process to move these students to a higher level. There needs to be a review of certain classes that have Level 1 students, back to the elementary level.

- Analysis of the use of District buildings.
- Analysis of how the District uses Title I money intended for low achieving students.
- How does the District balance the demographic population in schools, i.e. racial, social, economic, achievement? Other school Districts have looked at ways they balance schools. The District is seeing persistently lower scores in some schools, which is what get those schools on those lists. If that is the case, do we create certain classrooms in schools and direct resources towards those students? Look at overburdening schools with low-achieving students.

- Need to focus on the achievement gap between the white and minority students. That has to do with training on cultural sensitivities. Finalizing the APPR with the teacher's union.
- What are we doing at the elementary level? Half of our students are failing when they get to middle school.
- Begin to think about restructuring elementary education.
- How does the data compare with other area schools? The District needs to look at suburban schools. Look at success models. Focus on best practices.
- Tracking assessment information in the middle school level.
- We can decide what excellence looks like for ourselves. Set a direction and a course for excellence.
- Shared Decision Making Plan evaluated and the establishment of the district-wide committee and training in the SDM.
- Personalized Education Plan for each student.
- Student and parent surveys.
- Diversify teaching staff.

The next step is to prioritize these to use as a governance tool to set goals.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Alternative Education

Dr. Diggs advised that the data collection subcommittee of the Alternative Education Think Tank met earlier this week and decided that data collection would begin with the MAPs Program. The group is working on the methodology that will be used in the process. They will meet again on September 19th. Ken Cioffi was selected as facilitator and Ms. Mackey was selected as the recorder. The Personal Education Plan subcommittee will meet on Tuesday, August 23rd. The large group will meet on September 12th.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Mrs. Leet requested a report from the Volunteer Coordinator related to what has been accomplished and future goals.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Mackey made a motion to adjourn. Dr. Brandon seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.