



**CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF ALBANY**

**September 1, 2011**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Albany High School**

**PRESENT:** Dan Egan, President  
Rose Brandon, Vice President  
Felicia Green  
Edith Leet  
Melissa Mackey  
Alexandra Streznewski  
Dr. Raymond Colucciello  
Dr. Tresa Diggs  
Bill Hogan  
Ken Cioffi  
Linda Jackson-Chalmers  
Jeffrey Honeywell, Esq.

**ABSENT:** None

**Call to Order:**

- Meeting was called to order at 7:15 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 add a resolution to Routine Consent to approve a resignation and related agreement for Rhonda McClam. Ms. Streznewski seconded the motion

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

Motion passed.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT.**

Mr. Lesko introduced Fahima Muthuvappa, a senior at Albany High, who, along with Wesley Pluviose-Philip, is an aspiring doctor. Wesley was unable to attend the meeting. Both students are featured in this year's school calendar. Once they have achieved the goal of becoming doctors, they want to open a clinic together. Fahima spoke to the Board about her experiences and her future plans.

Mr. Lesko then introduced Alexis Fiddemon, a sophomore at Albany High. Ms. Fiddemon was one of the students featured in last year's school calendar. Ms. Fiddemon won the 2011 Phenomenal Teen Pageant last Friday. Participants were required to attend a series of leadership and character development workshops centered on the goals of the program. Ms. Fiddemon aspires to be an architect or an engineer and plans to attend RPI.

Dr. Colucciello expressed his gratitude to the Maintenance Department for tireless efforts in getting the District schools ready for opening day. Staff were also involved in preparations for the recent storm. Dr. Colucciello noted the District and the City of Albany were well prepared for the recent storm. Unfortunately, neighboring communities were not as fortunate.

### **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public speakers in attendance.

### **INFORMATION**

#### **Elementary/Middle School Summer School**

Ms. Rudnick introduced the two coordinators for the summer school programs, Tanya Amodeo and Jodi Commerford, who gave a presentation on the Literacy Links Reading Program. The presentation included the rationale of the program, goals and design, teacher orientation, daily schedules and curriculum, classroom support, community support, attendance, assessments, Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, Pre to Post Assessment Growth, and next steps.

Dr. Diggs introduced Kandie Antonetti, the coordinator of the Middle School Summer Program. This is the second year Ms. Antonetti has served as coordinator for the program. Ms. Antonetti gave a presentation on the summer school program with objectives, enrollment, Program of Study, and recommendations for next year. Ms. Antonetti spoke about the recommendation to form a Summer School Committee so that the program is structured through the course of the school year in preparation for the summer program. Dr. Diggs noted the summer program engaged the students and created cognitive and relevant learning for them. The student-prepared presentations showed insight and critical thinking skills. This was very different from other summer school programs.

- When do you start recruiting elementary students for summer school?  
Planning for the program began in May. Principals sent out applications in late May. Enrollment was finalized the second week of June.
- Enrollment figures indicate the highest number of students came from some of the District's highest performing schools. How is the decision made about the number of classrooms at each school? Do we want to look at increasing participation at schools that are struggling and does that require additional recruitment?

Principals in those struggling schools sent out applications two and three times. Enrollment was ongoing. There are also all-day programs in the neighborhoods of the lower-performing schools that have an impact on recruitment efforts.

- That might be something the committee could look at: how do we get the students who need it most to participate?
- In middle school, the criteria for summer school is failing two or more core courses. If literacy is the focus of the elementary school and the student gets to middle school and is struggling with reading and if ELA is the only failed course, the student is not eligible for summer school, but we know the student needs to read by the time he gets to high school. Students struggling with reading who are going from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade into 9<sup>th</sup> grade can use all the help available to them over the summer.

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade program was supposed to accommodate those students who did not necessarily fail two core classes. It was designed also for those students as transition. It was part of the high school's transition program so the guidance counselors and Stan Harper advised students that if they needed assistance, it was available for them. Unfortunately, recruitment efforts were not successful.

Could you describe the student projects? Had the teachers used Project-based Learning (PBL) before? What did you learn that could be shared with more teachers using project-based learning this year?

There were a few teachers from the high school who had used PBL, and they helped out. The feedback was positive. Teachers felt that they needed more training and experience. ELA and Social Studies students used books from the District reading list that had a social studies topic. The students did projects related to those, e.g., the World War, slavery. Project were focused on skits and writing.

- What would you pass on to teachers who haven't done PBL, from your experience this summer?

The key to teaching is to motivate and engage the students. Teachers need to connect with students.

- Could the District consider a full-day summer school program that might include recreation as well as learning?

The program this year ran as a four-hour program for 19 days at a cost of \$165,000. The District ran a full-day (8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.) program two years ago, including transportation. The cost of that program was close to \$250,000. This year the District was able to use Title I money to support the program, along with Title I ARRA funding and IDEA funding from the special education budget, because 15% of that budget can be used on regular education initiatives to prevent students from entering special education programs. Next year, the Title I ARRA money will sunset. The District will no longer receive that funding. At budget time, the District will have to consider the cost of any summer school program.

- There are concerns that the students who really need the extra help are not getting it.

All students receiving AIS services were targeted first for the summer school program.

Applications were sent out more than one time, and principals made phone calls to parents. The lower-achieving schools were initially allotted more space, but with low enrollment numbers, the doors were opened up to other schools.

- Why do you recommend that Alternative Education students need an alternative program? Students who came from ALC had been on homebound instruction. Coming back into the school setting where there is not a lot of support for them presented serious behavior issues. This issue was causing a negative impact on the other students in the classes. We need to work on the skills of these students during the school year so that they do not need to attend summer school.
- What types of assessments were used to determine skill level changes? I would like to propose collaboration with the YMCA so students coming out of half-day sessions would attend the Y program. I also favor mandatory summer school for those students failing core classes, making it mandatory that they attend summer school and if they fail summer school, to repeat the course the next school year.

That type of collaboration was in place for the lower-achieving school sites that could accommodate the Y programs.

- The research shows students lose ground academically during the summer. It would have been great if students who did not attend this program had been measured in June to determine how much ground they lost through the summer. The District would then able to determine the effect of this program.

Those students will be measured in the fall using the Fountas & Pinnell assessments. That information will be compared to where the student was in June prior to the start of the program.

### **Race To The Top**

Ms. Rudnick explained that New York State was awarded Race to the Top (RTTT) money. The District was also awarded a portion of these funds. The Capital Region BOCES will be working with the District over the next few years on insuring that District staff is trained on the effective use of data and the integration of Core Curriculum Standards in both English language arts (ELA) and math. Ms. Rudnick introduced Kathryn Gerbino, Ph.D., Assistant District Superintendent for Instruction; Susan Yagielski, RTTT math coach; and Jen Wells, RTTT ELA coach. She gave a presentation regarding the Race to the Top Network Team Partnership with the Capital Region BOCES. Dr. Gerbino advised the Common Core Standards Initiative, involving 51 states and territories) is a joint effort to collectively develop and adopt a core set of academic standards for equity in public education. Local education will align local instruction, use data, participate in professional development, and conduct teacher and principal evaluations. Every school in the District will implement educator- and classroom-level reforms via inquiry teams, measuring every step of the way.

The Common Core State Standards are a critical first step to bring about real and meaningful transformation of our education system to benefit all students. The common core standards help define the knowledge and skills all students need in order to be succeed in college and careers. Expectations will be consistent for all students. Additional aspects of the common core standards were also reviewed. Information about the Race to the Top, Critical Reform of the Regents, the Delivery System, and Funding was given. The District will need to establish a Network Team (Capital Region BOCES), and implement a Teacher/Principal Evaluation System.

Over the course of 2011-12, training on implementation of common core standards for ELA and math will take place along with the implementation and training of the school-based inquiry teams and training on the implementation of new performance evaluations for teachers and principals in ELA and Math.

Through 2012-13, training on access and use of Early Warning Data System, training on access and use of the Instructional Improvement Reporting System, training on implementation of ELA and Math curriculum models aligned with the common core standards and the implementation of performance evaluations for all remaining teachers and principals will take place.

2013-14 will include training for implementation of curriculum models for science, social studies, and arts; training on use of formative assessments in science, social studies, and arts; and implementation of performance evaluations for ALL teachers and principals using the State-developed value-added growth model. Training for Implementation of PARCC summative assessments in ELA and Math is scheduled for 2014-2015.

- How do you move a District to a place where those schools that are struggling more receive additional resources?

The State does allocate additional resources to schools that are in need of improvement, based on accountability status. The long-term response is that the District needs to work with each student every day to make certain that the students receive what they need to be successful.

- How are we going to address those schools that are in a perilous position? We need a multi-pronged approach to address and meet all the needs. How do we craft solutions to meet all of those needs?

That is a values question led by the Superintendent in consultation with the Board, as to how funds are disbursed.

### **Grade Configuration**

Mr. Egan noted previous discussions included the recommendation that Board members be appointed to this committee. There are experts and research on this issue. Mr. Egan suggested that the Board hear from these people prior to making that decision.

Dr. Colucciello noted Mr. Greg Jones, Principal of New Scotland Elementary School, has been asked to lead this committee based on his knowledge of the community and his background in mathematics. The purpose of the discussion this evening is to hear from the Board other ideas. We have asked an outside consultant to determine enrollment throughout the District.

- I would like to see the possibilities of split grades for those students who are not ready to go forward to a higher grade. I would like to serve on this committee. We have an Alt Ed task force. How is what you would be doing different?
- demographics
- The Board has had several discussions about grade configuration, including having a separate Pre-K Center.

The Board has discussed a number of scenarios and Board members are interested in bringing these to the committee for consideration. The Board also discussed grades in separate schools. Several board members are interested in serving on this committee.

Following discussion, Board members were asked to forward their comments and ideas to the Clerk of the Board. That information will be formatted into a document the Board can work with as it continues this discussion at a future meeting

### **Field Trips**

Dr. Colucciello noted that in consideration of recent concerns expressed by Board members related to District field trips and the lack of accessibility for all students to participate in these trips, he has asked Ms. Cecily Wilson to look at the District Field Trip Policy. Ms. Wilson advised that the leaders at Albany High School, in collaboration with the Building Leadership Team, discussed field trips in the new academies. The goal is for every student to have the opportunity to attend. The Building Leadership Team has recommended that each Academy set a goal of 85% minimum participation rate for each grade-level trip. It has been proposed that starting next year each of the new academies at Albany High School have a field trip related to their theme organized by the Theme Coordinator and teachers in each academy and that is completed by April of each year.

Teachers will need to set clear parameters for what students need to do to be in good standing and will provide the support so that students meet the standards. It is also recommended that if individual teachers are going to be permitted to take students on trips abroad, they need to provide ways for students to raise funds to ensure that any interested student is able to attend. All trips should be reviewed by the Academy Principal and Theme Coordinator, before approval is obtained at the main office.

- Concern about the issue of equity. If the District continues to distribute money equally, how are students who take free and reduced lunch going to be able to afford to take the trip? There should be enough supports in place for those students to achieve the academic standing required in order to take the trip. In looking at some of the trips, the tour guides offer free trips to chaperones. If there any possibility of offering trips to economically disadvantaged students at a 5% discount? Also, students who have really worked hard and have made one bad decision should be afforded the opportunity to participate in these field trips.

One of the challenges of the theme coordinator will be to begin to build community relations with people who would be willing to sponsor students who are unable to pay for the trip. The 85% participation rate is to set a goal for the academies, which speaks to what the group is doing as a team and an academy to bring students along so they may be able to participate in the field trip. Standards will be developed throughout the academies to be consistent.

- Look at growth for the student and not just grades in considering academic standing.
- As part of the character building, we need to have fund raisers where everyone is able to participate, e.g., car wash. It is important to instill in the students that you have to work for this.
- Fund raising could also include the decision that funds will be raised to support a number of students who cannot afford to pay for the trip. That might be a principle that can be followed.

### **Strategic Plan**

Mr. Egan referred to the Strategic Plan, noting that the task before the Board is to align the seven strategies identified in the Strategic Plan and the items the Board identified at the last meeting and goals set in the recent past. Ultimately, the task is to set goals for the 2011-2012 school year. A worksheet document was provided to Board as a tool for identifying with the agenda, included the seven strategies, the result statements for those strategies, accomplishments, and draft goals. Mr. Egan suggested the next step is for the Board to take the worksheet and attached listings and to prioritize those items that are most important. Mr. Egan noted there is long list of things to be done. The Board needs to prioritize these items.

Discussion followed related to the format of the Strategic Plan. Board members agreed that academic achievement is the primary goal. The Board needs to give the administration direction. This item will be brought forward for additional discussion. The expectation is that the Board will provide top priorities to the administration. Completed worksheets are to be forwarded to the Clerk of the Board.

**ROUTINE CONSENT**

Mr. Egan presented routine consent items for approval. Proceedings of Meetings (August 18, 2011); Appointments (Probationary, Regular Substitutes, Miscellaneous); Transfers; Leaves of Absence; Resignation; Treasurer's Report; Budget Transfers over \$10,000 2010-11; Budget Transfers under \$10,000 2010-11; Budget Transfers over \$10,000 2011-12; Budget Transfers under \$10,000 2011-12; Revenue Status Report; Appropriation Status Report; Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund; Contracts on Previously Approved Bid Awards; Authorization to Enter into Contracts (see attached schedule); Membership Dues: Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce 2011-2012 - \$2,584.00; Resolution to Approve the Contract for Excellence Public Hearing; Committee on Special Education, Subcommittee on Special Education, and Committee on Pre-School Special Education. Also included is the resignation and agreement for Rhonda McClam. Mr. Egan made a motion for approval. Ms. Streznewski seconded the motion.

Ms. Mackey set aside the Resolution to Approve the Contract for Excellence Public Hearing. Ms. Green set aside Contracts on Previously Approved Bid Awards and Authorization to Enter Into Contracts. Mrs. Leet set aside the proceedings of August 18, 2011, and Appointments.

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

Motion passed.

Ms. Streznewski made a motion to approve proceedings of August 18, 2011. Dr. Brandon seconded the motion. Mrs. Leet requested that discussion regarding special programs for parents during orientation be included. The response was that parents would go through orientation with the student. Under routine consent there is a correction related to the person who made the motion and the person who seconded. Corrections have been to the proceedings.

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

Motion passed.

Ms. Streznewski made a motion to approve appointments. Mrs. Leet seconded the motion. Mrs. Leet noted that the listing under Arbor Hill Elementary School indicates appointments to the Building Leadership Team (BLT). Mrs. Leet questioned whether or not members of the BLT are paid. Mrs. Jackson Chalmers advised that members of the BLT are not typically paid. However, Arbor Hill Elementary School has retained the Community School Grant which paid for a coordinator for the Atlas Program and the Literacy Program. Instead of using the money for a coordinator, that school has chosen to use teacher leaders to conduct the business of their Atlas Program and their curriculum writing. This is a different use of the BLT. Dr. Colucciello suggested a job description be provided to Board members.

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

Motion passed.

Ms. Streznewski made a motion for approval of Authorization to Enter into Contracts. Ms. Green seconded the motion. Ms. Green confirmed that Mr. Honeywell reviewed the contracts. Ms. Rudnick advised any Pre-K provider is required to follow District curriculum. All programs are identical.

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

Motion passed.

Ms. Streznewski made a motion to approve 2011 Contracts for Previously Approved Bid Awards. Ms. Green seconded the motion. Discussion followed relative to the need for additional approval. Mr. Hogan advised the original bids, previously approved by the Board, were submitted with markup figures included in the bid. Mr. Honeywell advised that additional approval is not necessary. Ms. Streznewski withdrew the motion. The item is removed from the agenda.

Ms. Mackey made a motion to approve the Resolution on the Contract for Excellence Public Hearing. Ms. Green seconded the motion. Ms. Mackey asked if the District is required to hold this public hearing and if the public would be receiving information prior to the meeting. Mr. Hogan advised the hearing is a mandate. The hearing will include a brief overview. Everything under the Contract for Excellence has been integrated with everything the District is doing. Mr. Hogan will provide information to Board members.

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

Motion passed.

### **BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None

### **BOARD MEMBER ITEMS**

Mrs. Leet asked if a report on summer school and Regents results will be provided to the Board. Dr. Diggs advised this will be provided at the next Board meeting.

Where do we stand on scheduling a workshop? We are continuing to identify a date that is convenient for everyone. Mr. Egan advised the October 4, 2011 NYSSBA training is still available.

Mr. Egan reminded Board members to forward Grade Configuration and Goals suggestions to Ms. Cutting.

### **Adjournment**

Ms. Mackey made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Leet seconded the motion. The Board adjourned at 10:20 p.m.