

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
February 16, 2006
Eagle Point Elementary School
7:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Edward Brown, President
Teneka Frost, Vice President
Barbara Gaffuri, Secretary
William Barnette
Judy Doesschate
Susan Kushner

Dr. Eva Joseph
Terrance White
Linda Jackson-Chalmers
Joseph Dragone

ABSENT: Jackie Jenkins-Cox
Kathleen Wetmore

Call to Order:

Mr. Brown called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Joseph advised she met earlier this morning with Police Chief Tuffey and Patricia Aiken to discuss alternative program opportunities for students. Dr. Joseph noted this evening the Board would be discussing an alternative education program concept. Dr. Joseph noted other important topics on the agenda include discussion of an educational plan for Albany High School for next year and how that might drive budget resources. Further discussion of the 2006-06 Budget is also on tonight's agenda.

Dr. Joseph advised schools are closed next week for winter recess.

Dr. Joseph reviewed various events that have taken place during the month, including the All City String Concert. Dr. Joseph noted all events were well attended with excellent presentations and performances by students. Dr. Joseph noted this is Black History Month and the District is hosting a celebration in recognition of all of the cultural wonders and accomplishments. That celebration will take place on February 28th at 7:00 p.m. at Myers Middle School.

Mr. Brown requested a motion to change the order of items listed on the agenda as follows, Item 4 Information Items will become item #3 and item #5 Action Item will become Item #4. Item #3 Discussion Item will become item #5. Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to amend the agenda. Ms. Frost seconded the item.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. John Cutro addressed the Board relative to violence intervention strategies.
2. Mayor Jerry Jennings addressed the Board relative to school violence.
3. Larry Frank addressed the Board relative to the Founders Day Dinner and the budget.
4. Al Salinero addressed the Board relative to the swing space plan for School 19 and school safety.

5. Linda McTague addressed the Board relative to the swing space plan for School 19.
6. Joanne LaFrancais addressed the Board relative to the swing space plan.
7. Bob Fullam addressed the Board relative to the Albany High PTSA involvement in school safety.
8. Carol Davis addressed the Board relative to school safety.

INFORMATION ITEMS

High School Program Planning

Dr. Joseph advised this item is related to a conceptual plan. Dr. Joseph noted she uses the word conceptual because this is the first time the Board is talking about it. Dr. Joseph advised as the Board thinks about Albany High School and the physical plant in terms of what it provides for students and how it supports educational programs, one of the District's goals is continually to have stronger educational programs. Dr. Joseph advised the District has been thinking about how it might better organize the educational programs in the High School so that the excellent quality is sustained and at the same time, allow for continued growth. Dr. Joseph advised Mr. Dragone has put together a presentation that highlights the concept. Dr. Joseph noted this is a draft plan that will help drive some of the budget planning in terms of resources and the goal of having successful middle and secondary schools.

Mr. Dragone described the principles of smaller learning communities (Autonomy, Identity, Personalization, Instructional Focus and Accountability), implementation and practice of smaller learning communities, results of successful smaller learning communities (Achievement, Safety and Order, Equity, Affiliation/belonging, Truancy and dropout reduction, improved extracurricular participation and improved parent engagement). Mr. Dragone continued with a description of the current 9-12 model, a conceptual draft model for 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 with a graphic model for those years.

Following a lengthy discussion that included a motion by Mrs. Gaffuri and second by Ms. Kushner to extend the time allotted for this item, which was approved unanimously by the Board, Mr. Brown advised the item would be placed on the next agenda for discussion/possible action.

Alternative Education Programs

Dr. Joseph advised Mr. Dragone has prepared a presentation highlighting the Alternative Education Programs as well as future plans to improve alt-ed program opportunities. Dr. Joseph also noted the District has discussed the possibility of beginning some of these opportunities in the very near future. Dr. Joseph advised this is an information item that typically is presented to the Board at this time in terms of budget planning, in consideration of the 2006-07 budget. Dr. Joseph emphasized that the satellite alt-ed program model is something that the District is thinking about for this year and that Mr. Dragone would be presenting in that context.

Mr. Dragone began his presentation by reviewing the current alternative programs in the District - Harriet Gibbons, MsAP (Middle School Alternative Program), TOPs (Tutorial Opportunity Program for Students). Mr. Dragone outlined program concerns such as attendance rates, strength of academic program, reduced academic opportunities. Mr. Dragone presented the 2006-07 Program Plan, creating a 9th grade high school preparatory program, restructuring learning time in the MsAP and TOPs program to a 5 hour day, providing daily counseling support and strengthening the school/home/community connection.

Mr. Dragone presented (SAIL) Satellite Alternative Intervention and Learning Centers, which creates satellite school locations in different areas of the City, providing a five-hour academic program, “Gen Y” training in computer technical assistance, focus on literacy, counseling services regarding “Barriers to Education”, Career coaching, Pre-GED/GED Program, and Intergenerational community opportunities. Mr. Dragone presented budget considerations for alternative and high school planning such as staffing, technology, transportation, curriculum/program development and teacher professional development. In response to an inquiry, Mr. Dragone advised he would provide the Board with information relative to research related to this model. Following a lengthy discussion, Mr. Brown advised this item would be on the next agenda for discussion.

ACTION ITEM

Educational Planning Consultant Contract

Mr. Brown presented the contract with Planning Alliance for Educational Planning Services for the High School. Dr. Joseph advised this contract, through Sue Robertson will provide assist in developing the High School restructuring concept for next year. Dr. Joseph noted the educational plan would be the driving factor in the high school restructuring plan. Dr. Joseph advised as the District thinks about planning for next year, Ms. Robertson’s experience will be significant in assisting the District with this plan. Mr. Barnette made a motion to approve the contract. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. Following discussion, Mr. Brown called the vote.

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

DISCUSSION ITEMS

2006-2007 Budget Presentation

Dr. Joseph advised at the last meeting, the Board was presented with the strategies and new initiatives. Dr. Joseph noted this evening, the District would be seeking feedback and items Board Members would like to have more information about in terms of the initiatives that are presently in place. Dr. Joseph advised the next step is a review of the core, expanded and requested strategies relative to the goals. Dr. Joseph referred to a chart indicating the three different strategies. The first column, Core Strategies indicates the items the District feels are necessary/required in order for the District to sustain a strong core program for quality learning. The expanded strategies column is the next level. These are opportunities for programs the District has developed that really enhance or take the District to the next level in terms of opportunities or programs that support the goals. The requested strategies column are items the District feels are excellent opportunities to continue to support the work, but are not required in order for the District to sustain the core academic program. They are opportunities to strengthen, enrich and go to the next level in providing a quality academic program.

Dr. Joseph noted this information works very well in the budget process by assisting the District in defining the must haves in relation to things that the District would like to have, feel that are important, yet not absolutely necessary or mandatory in terms of maintaining programs. Dr. Joseph noted the items that have asterisks (*) indicate new strategies that the District put forward in the last presentation. Dr. Joseph advised while they are new initiatives, they may still be required, i.e. under Grade 9-12 the new Math Standards Implementation is listed. This is a new initiative, however it is a core strategy, which is mandatory. Dr. Joseph noted on that same page under the Requested Strategies, the District has been successful with the Columbia Writing Workshop and this is listed under a Requested Strategy. Costs of program components will be part of future budget discussions.

Resolution on Legislative Agenda

Ms. Doesschate presented two different documents recommended by the Intergovernmental Committee for Board consideration. Ms. Doesschate advised the first is an item, which is a resolution regarding the Adoption of a 2006 Legislative Agenda is being presented for discussion and possibly action at the next Board Meeting. Ms. Doesschate noted approval of this resolution by the Board enables the District to take concrete action in appealing to the Legislature to help the District address some of the problems that have been created by the inequities that have existed in terms of State Aid Funding, the impact of the Charter Schools and also the fact that the District is dealing with such a large proportion of tax exempt properties in the City and the impact on the tax base.

Ms. Doesschate presented the resolution and requested that Board Members provide comments to her attention prior to the next meeting. Ms. Doesschate noted the resolution is simply to adopt a Legislative Agenda that would include the District taking action to approach the Legislature and directing the Superintendent to engage in activities to increase State Building Aid, address the excessive impact of Charter Schools on the Albany City School District, seek payments in lieu of taxes and increasing State Operating Aid. Ms. Doesschate advised while the District could have a very lengthy Legislative Agenda, because of things like the Governor's recommendation that there be no re-votes on the budget, a proposal for an additional \$6 million plus for Charter Schools in New York State, allowing Charter Schools to receive State Aid for Building and a wide variety of other things, the resolution looks for things that specifically go to the District's budget issues.

Ms. Doesschate advised her goal is to take action on this resolution and to have the second document, which is the justification of the 2006 Legislative Agenda that the District can share with taxpayers in this community that lets people know that this is what the School District is doing because these inequities have become such a huge burden for the taxpayers in the City. This could also be something that could be used for advocating in the press and to seek support through elected officials in the Legislature.

Mr. Doesschate advised anytime someone is advocating in the Legislature, there is always a sponsors memo for it and the justification, which people find to be the most challenging, in addition to the cost section, which is left to others as this legislation is put forward. Ms. Doesschate advised her goals is to be able to provide people with the information that could go into a sponsor's memo, letters to the Legislature and generally to educate the public about the issues. Ms. Doesschate made a motion that the resolution would be added to the March 7, 2006 agenda for discussion and possible action. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. Mrs. Gaffuri noted that two Board Members would be absent at the next Board Meeting and as such requested that this time be placed at the end of the agenda to allow those Board Members to be present for the vote. Mrs. Gaffuri advised Board Members would be attending fiscal training, which is required for new Board Members. Mrs. Gaffuri suggested that under Item 1, Increase State Building Aid for Albany City Schools, to include the present percentage of state building aid.

The Board voted unanimously to place this item on the next agenda for action.

Ms. Doesschate requested that all comments relative to this resolution be directed to her attention as soon as possible.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Intergovernmental Committee

Ms. Kushner noted the resolution previously brought forward relative to the Legislative Agenda was reported out of the Intergovernmental Committee at the meeting last week. The purpose of the resolution is to bring before the legislature and the public the burden faced by the Albany City School District in terms of the inequity in State Aid, the impact of Charter Schools and how severely underserved the District is in terms of funding. Ms. Kushner noted the resolution does not limit the District in taking a position on other legislative initiatives that affect the District, i.e. limiting school districts to one vote.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Mrs. Gaffuri noted the All City String Concert at Livingston last evening was very well attended. Mrs. Gaffuri noted six of the high school students have been recognized as far away as the Canadian Border as outstanding musicians in the State of New York. Mrs. Gaffuri noted there are two more concerts, the all City Band Concert on March 15, 2006 at Hackett at 7 p.m. and All City Choral Concert at Myers Middle School is scheduled for March 22, 2006 at 7 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Frost made a motion to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

Catherine L. Cutting
Clerk of the Board