

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

January 17, 2008

7:00 p.m.

## Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology

### PRESENT:

Teneka Frost, President

William Barnette, Vice President

Barbara Gaffuri, Secretary

Dr. Mark Barth

Judy Doeschate (arrived at 7:35)

Melissa Mackey

Wayne Morris

Dr. Joseph Dragone

James Mathews

Linda Jackson Chalmers

### Absent/Excused:

Dr. Eva Joseph

### Call to Order:

Ms. Frost called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance. Ms. Frost welcomed the members of the audience and thanked them for taking the time to attend the meeting. Ms. Frost advised Dr. Joseph is unable to be present due a death in her family.

### SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Dragone gave the Superintendent's Report.

- Recognition and congratulations to Mr. William Barnette, Vice President of the Board of Education on receiving the NAACP Education Award at the Freedom Fund Dinner. Mr. Barnette noted he is very honored by this recognition.
- Recognition to Ashley Chapple, the former Student Representative to the Board of Education. Ashley is an Albany High School graduate currently attending Cortland in pursuit of a teaching degree.
- In conjunction with the City Council PTA, the district will be hosting the Albany City School District Choice Options for schools, including Magnet programs, Pre-k, the middle school lottery, open enrollment and many of the district's award winning and featured high school programs that offer students great choices in the district. This event will take place at Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology on Wednesday, January 23, 2008 from 10:00 a.m. to Noon.
- Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology will also host the ending ceremony of the annual Martin Luther King Celebration.
- Commissioner Mills, Deputy Commissioner Johanna Duncan Poitier, Deputy Commissioner David Miller and Regent Bowman were in the district with Sir Michael Barbera, a high-ranking official in Tony Blair's education department. Currently, the State Education Department is undergoing a self- review, an organizational definition of sorts and our colleagues from England were offered the opportunity to see urban middle schools. The Commissioner and his delegates, with the team from England visited Myers

Middle School and William S. Hackett Middle School and spoke very highly of all the work this is going in these schools. The Commissioner made a special point of mentioning at the Superintendent's Conference on Friday that he was in two of our schools and how impressed he was with the focus on instruction and student achievement. Thank you to Mr. Newman and Mrs. Wilkins, their faculty and staff members in the buildings for opening their doors to these guests.

- The district had the privilege of hosting Governor Spitzer, Mayor Jennings, Senator Breslin, County Executive Breslin, Assembly Member McEneny and other officials at Schuyler Achievement Academy at a press conference earlier this date regarding the Early Childhood Health Initiative, for which that the state is aggressively pursuing funding. This location was chosen as it is one of the district School Based Health Centers and it is a full-service community school. Thank you to Mrs. Davis, faculty and staff for opening their doors to welcome these guests as the district continues to support safe schools and healthy students throughout the district.
- Recognition to Ms. Getto, Principal at North Albany Academy, who is the pioneer of putting the morning announcements on a pod cast, which is the result of innovation that started as a problem that was solved in a new way. Congratulations to Mike Lei, the technology coordinator at North Albany, Ms. Getto and her team. The pod casts are available to the teachers and students in the classrooms and the next day they are placed on the albanyschools.org website.
- Ms. Jackson Chalmers noted the input from parents and the City Council PTA is presently under review in the Code of Conduct policy as it relates to elementary students. The original committee that developed the latest revision to the Code of Conduct policy will be reconvened at the end of this month to review suggestions made by the parents. Recommendations to the superintendent and the board are expected by the end of February.

Are there children in the district who do not have health insurance? If so, is there a way to identify those students and to reach out to those families to make sure that they are aware about the benefit of Child Health Plus. There is no reason why a child does not have health insurance in the State of New York. The district will look into this to determine if there are Albany students who do not have health insurance.

There was also a request from a board member for a presentation on health issues at a future board meeting?

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Holly Klein addressed the board regarding the lack of recreation equipment in the playground at Delaware Community School.
2. Steve McLaughlin addressed the board regarding violence at Albany High School and alternative programs for those students who are involved in violent behaviors.
3. Adele O'Connell addressed the board regarding school safety at Albany High School and the effect on students to have armed police entering the school and students who have to attend classes with food all over themselves because of a food fight.
4. Marlin Anderson addressed the board regarding safety issues at Albany High School and cautioned that the district not cross the line from education to correction.

### INFORMATION ITEM

#### School District Performance Report

Dr. Dragone advised the presentation would focus on two parts, achievement and enrollment. Both these components are critical when looking at budget implications. Dr. Dragone recognized the Office of Instruction administrators as well as the building principals and other members of the administrative team that work in the district. Dragone presented State results from English and Math, graduation results, and non-academic data points, attendance, dropouts, suspensions, benchmark comparisons and enrollment projections. Three levels of analysis were presented, district, building level and sub-population analysis. The district is seeing gains in achievement in ELA scores district wide. Need areas, where targets were not met, need to be addressed, along with budget implications. Dr. Dragone noted one point below the target is counted as not meeting target, although there may have been significant improvement in that area. Dr. Dragone noted that although Philip Livingston met their benchmarks in Math and English. Unfortunately, they did not meet the benchmark due in part because they fell below the 95% test benchmark. Hackett met all of its benchmarks established by the state for last year. Preliminary reports indicate growth across the board from 2003 to 2007 for high school ELA results. Math figures grades 3-8 indicate growth at all levels with the exception of grade 8. Grades 6 & 7 have the greatest improvement. The presentation also included achievement performance summaries for each school, along with benchmark comparisons and achievement targets. Graduation rates and attendance rates suspension rates and dropout rates were also reviewed. However, the latest figures on dropout rates have not yet been made available. Pre-K enrollment, indicating growth of approximately 150 students from 2002-03 to 2007-08 enrollment, was also reviewed. A Pre-K presentation is schedule for a future agenda. Dr. Dragone reviewed the Student Performance Standards and Strategic Direction developed by the Strategic Planning Team as part of the Strategic Planning Process.

- We have made progress and we will be diligent in following up on how the district continues to increase student achievement. Recognition of teachers who have significant student improvement.
- Can the instructional supervisors indicate what they feel has made the difference and where do they need additional support? Supervisors will have budget meetings where they will be able to discuss programs and additional needs. That information will be presented to the board as it goes through the budget development process.
- What can be attributed to the significant drop in suspension figures? The reduction in suspensions at Philip Livingston and Harriet Gibbons, have decreased the numbers significantly.
- What is the performance index? It is the number that is assigned to the building or to a group or to a grade level that explains how well students tested on an assessment. It is comprised of the percentage of students scoring at each performance level. The performance index increase is a reflection of growth.
- Generally, the performance indexes of 6<sup>th</sup> graders in ELA were about the same or higher in 7<sup>th</sup> grade in two of the middle schools. One, the performance of 7<sup>th</sup> graders going into 8<sup>th</sup> grade went down. What is that telling us? The tests are not vertically scaled. They do not have constant measures among the grade levels. You can't compare grade level to grade level and administration-to-administration. Tests changed in 2006.

- Is there a full service room at the high school? No. The district started pieces of it two years ago in collaborating with agencies. The biggest problem is resources. There are several principals interested in establishing a full service room in their school.
- A request was made by a board member to have the topic of a full service room at the schools on a future agenda as soon as possible.
- What can the board look forward to in terms of administration taking this information and assessing it against what is being done in the classroom and using that information to make improvements to the instruction, curriculum, professional development, etc. This information needs to be used to help us to improve these numbers, not simply to meet targets, but to insure that students are getting proper education. As we are going into the budget process, we do need to make decisions about this and the board is counting on the administration to use this data to assess programs and make sure the proper adjustments are made in order to keep improving these figures. We have capacity issues in several areas. Manpower regarding collection reporting and analysis to the field. With two programmers, one full-time at the high school and another for the remainder of the district. Recommendations from Data Core for districts on how districts focus on having capacity in the technical system to use the information. Second, is supporting the literacy components. Additional resources are needed to increase the number of literacy coaches to help support teachers in the classroom, to help them become better at their craft.

Ms. Frost advised the board would be coming back to this discussion through the budget development process, using this information to make the necessary adjustments and improvements to insure that the district continues to see improvements in testing scores.

### **K-8 Enrollment Projections**

Mr. Tony Armlin presented a very comprehensive analysis of district and charter school enrollments, both historically and projected future enrollment going forward so that the district can do effective planning. A model was created that will allow the district to manipulate changes in enrollment both in the district and in the charter schools to do better and more accurate projections as the district moves forward over the next several years. The model is a work in progress. The presentation this evening is an overview, with more work to be done. The presentation included a topic overview, a summary composite graph of district enrollment and charter school enrollment, major observations summary, actual and projected charter enrollment, graduation history. Mr. Armlin advised the total eligible district enrollment is projected to remain stable for the next 6 years at approximately 10,400.

District enrollment has reduced by 12% over the past 8 years due to the introduction and growth in the number and capacity of Charter Schools. Actual CSDA enrollment has fallen from 10,111 to 8,889 between 2000 and 2007. Future CSDA enrollment is projected to decline due to the increased NYS approved charter school capacity over the next 6 years. CSDA enrollment could fall to slightly below 8,000 students in the next 5 years due to this growth in charter school capacity based on the modeling assumptions. Mr. Armlin reviewed charter school growth for 2007 – 2014, which is an additional 69% in maximum allowable capacity.

Mr. Armlin noted the enrollment modeling summary points. The models that have been created are based upon the best information currently available to the district. The Models have been set-up and are designed to allow future improvement and updating based on actual enrollment changes as well as future work to be completed to specifically model individual schools and

grade-level enrollment, Currently these grade-level numbers have been based on projected school populations and averaged across grades. More work is required in this effort and continued focus on charter school impacts to the district must be assessed. Actual charter school enrollment is very difficult to predict and caution must be used so that over-projection is avoided. This would result in the district underestimating its projected enrollment, which is very problematic. Board members reviewed assumptions.

- Is the district assuming that the private and parochial school enrollment would remain the same despite the fact that have also experienced declining enrollment due to charter schools? Information indicates 1,300 to 1,400 district students are attending private and parochial schools. This number has been consistent over the past several years. It did not show significant decline or growth. It was relatively stable. That was not taken into consideration.
- Explain capacity of 84%. The 84% is a calculation of the current enrollment of charter schools against their approved capacity. Take the individual charters and look at each school and its gradation and the maximum students that it can hold. That's its maximum capacity. The configuration changes based on new approved charters as well as modification of existing charters, which happens every year. This creates an enormous challenge to the district in trying to plan where the charter school enrollment is going to be.
- What will happen to class size and state aid ability based on class size? The 84% is the charter schools enrollment based on total capacity. It doesn't have any reflection on the district's enrollment other than the number of students it takes away. It does not affect aid ability. It does effect the number of students that are in our classrooms. It draws those students out. The higher their occupancy in any given year, the more they are hitting their maximum capacity, the more they have actually taken away from the district's enrollment. It would then affect the aid received by the district.
- The issue is having more and more students in the district attending charter schools as charter schools continue to increase their enrollment. We cannot continue to believe that we can operate a school district that is continuing to decrease enrollment on the same operating budget in place. The board needs to make serious decisions based on reality, although unpopular.
- What schools have we lost students to charter schools? Based on the current situation, all schools have been affected. There isn't a school in the district that hasn't lost students to charter schools. Also, there isn't a school in the district that hasn't taken back charter schools. What are customers saying?
- Further analysis of the neighborhood impact and the dialogue about the middle schools. Who is leaving what school and why? Why did you choose to come back? That is the question that needs to be answered.

## **FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT**

### **Discussion Item Related to the Arbor Hill Project**

Mr. Barnette advised the Facilities Committee has heard the presentation that will be presented to the board this evening. Mr. Gifford advised the Arbor Hill Elementary School is the last school going through design approval in the current facilities plan. The district is anticipating finishing this school for SED submittal in April, with the bidding process scheduled for late fall, construction to begin in January 2009 and completion in September 2010. The presentation this evening is a combination of schematic and design development.

The facilities team has been challenged in this project because of the water penetration issues. There are two aspects of this building. The first is the method of dealing with the envelope and the penetration of water into the building itself and the other challenge of retrofitting the open space interiors to a more classical classroom arrangement and relocation of facilities. It has been very challenging on the budget side of this project. This is also an extremely large building, which was designed for over 1,000 students. The proposal is to move the building to a capacity of 450 students, which also impacts the project.

Mr. Peckam of Collins & Scoville reviewed the new design of the building. The focus of the renovation is in three areas. The first is to repair the exterior envelope of the building to resolve the water issue. Improve the academic capabilities of the school to deliver the program and to look at ways to reduce the overall operating and maintenance costs of that building. Mr. Peckam reviewed the floor plan changes and the changes to the outside of the building. All carpeting would be removed from the school. Although there will be sections of the building that will not be used in the redesign, the shape of the exterior of the building will not change. The exterior of the building will be changed to include windows on the southeast elevation and the removal of staircases. The entire top of the building will be capped to eliminate water from coming into the building through the walls. A separate drop off area will be designated for buses and parent drop off to facilitate arrival and dismissal. Sidewalks will also be rehabilitated. Mr. Gifford noted the City has indicated that the walking bridge will be rehabilitated on a similar schedule to the renovation of the school.

Ms.. Doesschate made a motion to extend the time for this item by 15 minutes. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the motion.

- Concerns about a school that is much larger in size than needed. Skeptical about the solution to the water problem is to cap the walls and the leak in the hallway. Through water testing and investigation over this past summer, it was concluded that the water is entering the building through the walls, which would be corrected by capping the walls. There is a high level of confidence that the leaks in the building will be resolved.
- Concern about the location of the principal's office. Due to budgetary constraints, the office could not be relocated. The office has easy access to the majority of the school.
- Is the heating system being replaced? The majority of components are being replaced.
- In response to the question of tearing down this building and building a new, smaller school, Mr. Gifford advised that cost of new construction has increased significantly and the demolition of this building would be \$2-3 million, plus the construction of the new facility in the amount of \$15 –16 million range. Also, state aid for a new building would be less than the aid for renovations.
- The spaces in the building that are not being used at this time can be opened to new uses in the future.

This item will be on the next agenda for approval.

**ACTION ITEM**

**Strategic Planning Action Team Co-leaders**

Ms. Frost advised board members received a listing of team co-leaders that detailed those people who expressed interest in being a co-leader. One person to be confirmed is Ms. Debora Brown-Johnson. Each team membership includes one co-leader from the district staff and a member of the strategic planning team. Ms. Frost advised the needs to come to consensus related to board member participation as a co-leader or member on the action team. Board members discussed the issue of expedience in the process and involving parents and community and voting on the composition of the co-leaders as presented with an understanding that the challenge to the co-leaders is inclusion and that they need to move forward with the expectation that this will be a product that is the result of a partnership with the school district, parents and the community. Mr. Morris made a motion to approve the listing of co-leaders as presented. Dr. Barth seconded the motion.

The board voted unanimously (6 ayes and 1 abstention) to approve the motion.

Ms. Doesschate abstained.

Ms. Debora Brown-Johnson will be presented to the board for appointment following confirmation that she is available to serve as a co-leader.

**BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None

**BOARD MEMBER ITEMS**

Mr. Morris requested a discussion on a full service room at Albany High School be placed on a future agenda. Mr. Barnette noted the full service room is derivative of the full service school model. Mr. Barnette suggested Dean Catherine Briar-Lawson be invited to the discussion.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Barnette made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 10:40 p.m.