

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

October 19, 2006

7:00 p.m.

Harriet Gibbons High School

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

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

Absent: None

Call to Order:

Mr. Brown called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Brown welcomed the members of the audience and thanked them for taking the time to attend the meeting.

The Board of Education presented a distinguished alumnus award to Stefon Harris, an Albany High School graduate who has gone on to develop a very successful career in music. Mr. Harris has been nominated for three Grammy Awards for his jazz music and composition.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Joseph noted the Vision Van has been available to students in the district for the last several weeks. The van is the result of a Give the Gift of Sight Program through Luxottica, which is formally Lens Crafters. The van was made available to approximately 200 students, 188 of those students received glasses as a result of these services. Ms. Terry Nord and Mr. Joseph Verrigni coordinated the effort in terms of identifying students and providing transportation to access this service.

Dr. Joseph also noted the second annual UAlbany Alliance, Teach Out Program, took place earlier this week at Albany High School. Faculty and cabinet members were joined by UAlbany professors to team-teach in the classrooms, bringing college and university alive for students. The Alliance continues to gain momentum in a partnership that continues to evolve and grow in strength. Dr. Joseph advised the goal of the Alliance is to encourage change in the aspirations of Albany High School students so that they all see the opportunity to envision participation in the larger world of higher education. The opening of the Learning Center at Albany High School was also announced at the Teach Out. The Center will be open from students from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays.

The Center involves the Capital Region Sponsor a Scholar. It is co-sponsored by the Bank of America, Sefcu and Media Logic. Dr. Joseph advised the location of the Center is near the Library and the College Center. Dr. Joseph noted the Liberty Partnership Program at the Center for Women in Government and Civil Society at UAlbany have committed ten tutors, a counselor and a social welfare intern in addition to the tutors from Sponsor a Scholar, which has been a long-standing program at the high school. Dr. Joseph noted this has the potential to grow as the district moves forward with full service school supports for students at Albany High.

Dr. Joseph noted close to 100 district staff members participated in a full-day training through the National Urban Alliance earlier this week, focusing on cultural responsiveness in instruction in the classrooms.

Dr. Joseph advised that on November 7th, the district would be hosting parent conferences for students through grade 12, district wide. Dr. Joseph noted this would be the first time this event has been scheduled in the district. Notifications will be going out to parents and families. This opportunity will be a full-day event with time available for parent conferences in all schools.

Dr. Joseph also noted that on Monday, October 30th from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Arbor Hill Elementary Community School, the district, in partnership with Albany County Family Services, would be conducting a community forum entitled "Strengthening Home-School Connections". The topics will be conducting successful parent/teacher conferences, understanding student report cards and the testing process, data and assessment in terms of No Child Left Behind, what does it mean, school safety and the engagement of parents in terms of being responsible for the actions of their children. Dr. Joseph advised this is a very worthy workshop that will assist parents to be prepared for parent/teacher conferences.

Dr. Joseph advised the Council for Unity gave a presentation to the Youth Safety Task Force last week. The Council for Unity is a New York based group, which presents, in its simplest form, an opportunity to provide a counter culture for students in opposition to gangs. Dr. Joseph advised it was a riveting presentation by the president and founder, along with four of the program site coordinators. There was resounding support for the Council. Dr. Joseph advised a site visit is being planned for teachers, administrators, parents, community members and board members to see how it works. Dr. Joseph noted the District Attorney's Office is able to access \$25,000 to begin start-up of the program and the district is targeting Albany High School. The district will be developing an implementation plan for January. The district will also continue to look for additional funds. Dr. Joseph noted getting to the real heart of why students are bringing weapons to school, changing the mindset, changing the culture, changing their affiliations and putting students on a stronger ground in terms of self respect, values and a commitment to learning is the order of the day and the Council for Unity provides the district with an opportunity to do things differently in that regard.

Dr. Joseph introduced Ms. Deborah Sharpe-DeFries, who is expected to be appointed as the Director of Special Education this evening. Dr. Joseph Mr. Sharpe-DeFries is presently the Assistant Director of Special Education and has demonstrated her ability to lead that Department.

Dr. Joseph also recognized the members of the Board of Education in celebration of School Board Recognition Week, October 23-27, 2006. Dr. Joseph read a proclamation by Governor Pataki in celebration of this recognition. Dr. Joseph advised she is honored to be able to acknowledge the spirit of dedication and commitment that each board member puts forward, always with the best interest of our children and our school district in the decision-making process.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Laura Leon addressed the board regarding the facilities plan and the renovation plans for Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology.
2. Elaine DiMase addressed the board relative to the School 19 Swing Space Plan.
3. Myra Batista addressed the board regarding the Dual Language Program.
4. Marybeth Fowler addressed the board regarding the facilities plan and the renovation plans for Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology.
5. Michelle Flynn addressed the board regarding the facilities plan and the renovation plans for Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology.
6. Jim Lembo addressed the board regarding the Dual Language Program.
7. Peter Halewood addressed the board regarding the Dual Language Program.
8. Jacqueline Paredes addressed the board regarding the Dual Language Program.
9. Ken Skimmer address the board regarding the facilities plan and the renovation plans for Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology.
10. Annamarie Lippitt addressed the board regarding the Dual Language Program.
11. Robert Reilly addressed the board regarding the facilities plan and the renovation plans for Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology.
12. Elaine DiMase addressed the board regarding the School 19 Swing Space.
13. William Thomas addressed the board regarding the Dual Language Program.

ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS

Mr. Brown presented the following Routine Consent Items for approval. Abolish Position, Creation of Positions and Administrative Appointment. Ms. Jenkins-Cox made a motion for approval. Mr. Barnette seconded the motion. Mr. Barnette requested the Creation of Positions be set aside.

The board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve Routine Consent Items absent the item set aside.

Mr. Barnette made a motion to approve Creation of Positions. Ms. Frost seconded the motion. Mr. Barnette requested a breakdown of these positions. Following discussion Mr. Brown called the vote.

The board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the motion

INFORMATION ITEM

Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers gave a comprehensive presentation on staffing in the district, with particular focus on minority staffing. Total number of full-time employees in the district is 1,577, with a number of part-time employees. Payroll figures are approximately 2,000 employees. APSTA members, Teachers and Faculty, projected for June 2007 total 881, which is down from 888 in May 2006. There is a moderate decrease in Teaching Assistants and Teacher Aide, total of 230 down from 292, due to a cut backs based on budget considerations. Administrators number 55, down from 59, following the appointment this evening with two additional appointments anticipated in the near future. Support staff numbers have decreased from 418 to 412. This category includes Clerical, Operations & Maintenance, Security, Food Service and Technicians. Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers continued with a breakdown of staff by job category and ethnicity. Percentages indicate increases in some categories and decreases in others. Ms. Jackson-Chalmers reviewed recruitment measures, Administrators and Teaching/Faculty by ethnic code for both the elementary and secondary schools.

Ms. Jackson-Chalmers also presented Minority Teaching Staff Statistics for the Big Five Cities, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Yonkers and New York City and Suggested Minority Recruitment/Retention Goals for Teachers indicating the proposed figures for Albany for 6/07 at 15%, with the actual percentage at 13%. Ms. Jackson-Chalmers noted 24 minority teachers left the district this year due to staff retirements and resignations. Ms. Jackson-Chalmers also reviewed issues related to hiring and retaining minority teachers and strategies the district will use in efforts to increase minority staff in the district.

FACILITIES PROJECT REPORT

School 19 Swing Space

Dr. Joseph noted last year the district delayed the construction plans for School 19 to July 2007 to allow additional time to identify appropriate swing space because of the lack of sufficient space at the Philip Schuyler Elementary School. Dr. Joseph advised Mr. White and Mr. Jones have met with the School 19 community and faculty to develop a plan. Mr. White advised a number of members of the committee were present this evening to support the plan to be proposed. Mr. White advised as the facility plan has evolved, the timetable has changed for a variety of reasons. Mr. White advised members of the administrative staff met weekly with Mr. Jones, the principal at School 19 and members of the PTA, parents and teachers, to discuss available options. A public meeting was also held to share and gather information. Priorities centered on keeping as much of the school together as possible and limiting the transitions by students. The recommendations are that School 19 would consolidate to a three deep building and situate grades 1 - 5 in the Cathedral building on Park Avenue. Class size presently at 17.7 is projected to increase to an average of 23.5 students per class. Grade 6 would enroll in middle schools based on the current interim middle school enrollment plan and kindergarten would be housed at Eagle Point Elementary School. Mr. White advised additional discussion is needed to determine the location of the special education classes presently at School 19. Mr. Brown advised the plan would be presented for approval at the next board meeting.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

2005-2006 Financial Statements (Annual Audit Report)

Dr. Joseph advised part of the district's annual process is to review the financial statements in the form of what is considered the annual audit. Ms. Wetmore introduced Mr. James Cusack and Mr. John Criscone of Cusack & Company, who worked on the audit this year. Ms. Wetmore advised the district received an unqualified opinion this year, which is a clean opinion. Mr. Cusack advised the audit included working closely with the Audit Committee. Mr. Cusack met with the Committee to plan the audit. The audit was started in April and was completed in August. Mr. Cusack advised he and Mr. Criscone met with the Audit Committee last week, when the report was reviewed. Mr. Cusack noted everything is very positive. There are all unqualified opinions on the financial statements, federal programs, extracurricular activity reports. There were no material weaknesses noted in any systems. Mr. Cusack noted the district has very good people and good systems and good controls. Mr. Cusack noted district staff was very cooperative in presenting information for the audit.

Mr. Cusack also noted the district has been very proactive in establishing the Audit Committee one year before the Controller's Regulations requirements became effective. The district has also had an Internal Auditor a year and a half before the requirement, which is effective January 1, 2007. The district's Internal Claims Audit function has been active and operating before the reform bill. Mr. Cusack noted the district is of a few districts that have all these requirements in place. Mr. Cusack also noted that the district's Audit Committee is encouraging people from outside to serve on the committee, which is rare. Mr. Brown noted the board would be acting to accept the financial statements at the next board meeting.

Policy Review

6690 Audit Committee

Dr. Joseph noted there were a significant number of questions regarding the Audit Committee Policy, which was previously scheduled for review this evening. Dr. Joseph noted the Audit Committee itself has not yet had an opportunity to review the suggested recommendations and/or changes. Therefore, Dr. Joseph noted this policy would be brought back to the Audit Committee for additional review.

2270 School Attorney

Mr. Brown presented the School Attorney Policy for review. Board members discussed the verbiage related to people contacting the school attorney. Ms. Jackson-Chalmers advised these concerns would be brought back to the Policy Committee for clarification of the process for contacting the school attorney.

6640 Fixed Assets (Inventories)

Mr. Brown presented the Fixed Assets Policy for review. With no discussion or comment, Mr. Brown advised this policy would be recommended for approval at the next board meeting.

8334 Credit Card

Mr. Barnette advised he submitted changes to this policy for discussion this evening. Recommended changes are indicated in bold print as follows:

The Board of Education permits the use of district **issued** credit cards **for use** by certain school officials to pay for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of work-related duties for the district. A list of those individuals that will be issued a district credit card will be maintained in the Business Office and **acted on by the Board of Education** ~~reported to the Board each year~~ at its **annual** reorganizational meeting ~~in January~~. **The Board President shall sign the approved list.** All credit cards will be **for a unique account** in the name of the school district **with the name of the authorized school official printed on their assigned card.** **Each individual card user is accountable for all charges they authorize against the account card.** Mr. Barnette also recommended the word legitimate in the 3rd paragraph be changed to official. Dr. Joseph and Ms. Wetmore indicated their approval of these changes. Mr. Brown advised this policy would be presented at the next meeting for approval.

9710 Travel & Conferences

Mr. Brown presented the Travel & Conferences policy for review. With no discussion or comments, Mr. Brown advised this policy would be presented at the next meeting for approval.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Academic Committee – Ms. Doesschate advised the Committee would be providing items for discussion at the next meeting.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Ms. Doesschate advised she attended the Council for Unity presentation and she was very impressed. Ms. Doesschate advised she is very much in favor of having our students be part of the solution.

Ms. Doesschate advised she also attended a presentation by Dr. Griffin from Morehouse Medical College at SUNY Albany on School Violence and it was very informative. Dr. Griffin shared the definition of a friend “A friend is somebody who will not lead you into harm and will not impede your success”.

Mr. Barnette noted following the School Safety Forum he sent a note to board members, noting that this is a good idea. Mr. Barnette suggested additional forums related to parents partnering in education, after-school programs and creative academic thoughts. Mr. Barnette noted there were some really good ideas brought out at the School Safety Forum. Mr. Barnette asked that board members forward comments to his attention.

Mrs. Gaffuri advises she attended the open house at Albany High School and out of the multitude of open houses she attended in the past, this year there was focus from the health and guidance staff about students looking toward their future. Mrs. Gaffuri noted the personnel in these areas are a tremendous resource. Mrs. Gaffuri suggested that a presentation from the Guidance Counselors might help facilitate the educational experience in middle school and high school by showing parents and students how to use them so that parents and students become familiar with these resources.

Ms. Kushner suggested the employment figures should include figures after May 2006, which might change the percentage of minority staff to the targeted 15%.

Adjournment

Mr. Barnette made a motion to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Catherine L. Cutting
Clerk of the Board