



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
October 15, 2009
7:00 p.m.

Sheridan Preparatory Academy

PRESENT: Barbara Gaffuri, President
Melissa Mackey, Vice President
Judy Doesschate, J.D., Secretary
Dr. Mark Barth
Rose Brandon
Daniel Egan (left at 8:55 p.m.)
Wayne Morris

Dr. Raymond Colucciello
Dr. Tresa Diggs
Bill Hogan
Linda Jackson-Chalmers
Linda Rudnick

EXCUSED: None

Call to Order:

- Meeting was called to order at 7:00 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.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- Members of the Board of Education were recognized for their contribution to the school district as board members. October 19-23, 2009 has been designated by Governor Paterson as School Board Recognition Week. A proclamation from the Governor was read and board members heard comments from students expressing their gratitude for their dedication as they strive for improvement, excellence and progress in public education.
- The Board of Education will hear this evening a presentation on the Harlem Children's Zone. This project has great promise. It has achieved success and has been recognized nationally. It also has potential for this community because it's working together with members throughout the community.
- Governor Paterson has put forth a proposal for closing a \$5 billion deficit in the State of New York. This will have a devastating effect on the school district. Millions of dollars in reductions. Money that had been promised will not be received if this proposal comes to be. If the legislature increases Charter School tuition, this has the potential of another \$2.5 million the district will be sending to charter schools. Health insurance costs and the retirement fund will also increase. It does not bode well for this district. Additional information will be forthcoming. Mr. Hogan advised the district will need to look at all non-essential items and changes in staffing for possible reductions.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Alexandra Streznewski, Co-President of the Albany City Council PTA addressed the board relative to board member recognition. Ms. Streznewski advised the members of the City Council PTA would like to publicly express their appreciation to the members of the school board for all their efforts.

INFORMATION ITEM

Elementary School Assessments

Principals from Sheridan Preparatory Academy, Giffen Elementary School, Montessori Magnet School, Arbor Hill Elementary, Delaware Community School and Eagle Point Elementary School. Principals reviewed their assessment results, data and their vision for their schools. Principals reported on ELA results as well as Mathematics, Social Studies and Science information. Information related to attendance and suspension rates were discussed as well as some of the primary initiatives that are ongoing in the community.

- Were there any classes that missed their AYP this year?

AYP is determined by a total combination of all the classes in the school. All schools met their AYP. Any student that scores below 3 and 4 automatically received Academic Intervention Services.

- Do principals have a chance to meet with other to review data?

Principals reach out to each other to understand data and how to use data to enhance student performance. Principals also meet monthly to exchange ideas.

Principals talked about the need for support of literacy coaches and professional development in the future.

- How are the transiency rate and suspensions affecting outcomes in the different school buildings?

There are four full time literacy coaches and a Reading Recovery leader who spends time teaching Reading Recovery course work to teachers and also part-time literacy coaching. There is also an early childhood coordinator. There are 12 elementary schools so the schools share those positions. There is only one literacy coach at the middle level for Hackett and North Albany.

- What would be the optimum configuration for literacy coaches?

If the district could increase the number of literacy coaches to 6 that would be ideal. Four full-time, the Reading Recovery coach and 2 additional is where we would like to be. Also the middle schools should have their own coaches.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

2008-2009 Financial Statements

Alan Walther of Bonadio & Co. LLP provided a brief overview of the financials. Mr. Walther explained the process of the outside auditor review. The Audit Committee and management have already reviewed the reports. The role of the board is to accept the report. The auditors have issued an unqualified opinion on the financial statement, the highest level of assurance that can be given on financials. There were no internal control findings over financial reporting. There were no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies and no instances of non-compliance reported.

The federal audit presented the same results. Overall the district has a very clean report. Mr. Egan made a motion to approve the 2008-2009 financial statements.

- Increase in assets should include Pine Hills Elementary School. This listing will be reviewed and updated. This does not affect the board's approval based on verification of the listing. Mr. Egan made a motion to approve the 2008-2009 financial statements. Dr. Barth seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Resolution to Extend Appointment

The following resolution was presented for approval:

RESOLUTION TO EXTEND APPOINTMENT

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the Albany City School District hereby extends the appointment of Dr. Raymond Colucciello as Interim Superintendent of Schools until such time a full-time Superintendent is chosen, no later than July 10, 2010 and authorizes the Board President to execute an agreement to compensate Dr. Colucciello for his services.

Ms. Mackey made a motion for approval. Ms. Doesschate seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS

Routine Consent Items were presented as follow: Appointments (Miscellaneous); Transfers and Emergency Appointments. Ms. Doesschate made a motion to approve routine consent items.

Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Budget Development Calendar

A proposed 2010-2011 budget development calendar was presented for discussion. There are a number of dates that are regulated in terms of budget hearings, etc. As the district proceeds through the budget process, if there is need for additional meetings, the district has the ability to do that scheduling.

- There is no indication of input from the Budget Advisory Committee. There has been previous discussion relative to forming a committee, and the charge of the committee, membership, etc.

This is going to be a very contentious year. The State is considering reducing state aid for this year. There are a number of issues before the board this year. Mr. Colucciello suggested that if the district is going to blend a committee, you need to think about how it will be done, given the schedule being presented.

Discussion continued relative to educating members of a Budget Advisory Committee so that they are able to make decisions through the next budget process. A suggestion was made to increase public input during budget discussions at board meetings. Previous discussions indicated that this group would focus on one piece of the budget, to be informed about the process and then bring their concerns in a way that they could be managed within the process. Mr. Hogan suggested that he do a meeting in January – February to talk about the budget, discuss mandates, and give an overall review of the budget process. A suggestion was made that this discussion take place with the Audit Committee and recommendations will be brought before the board in terms of membership and charge of the committee.

Harlem Children's Zone

The district has joined with community leaders and partners in exploring the possibilities of a model program, based on the Harlem Children's Zone. To date the district has engaged in two formal meetings. The superintendent, cabinet members and principals of Arbor Hill Elementary School and North Albany Academy have been in attendance at these meetings, along with members of the Family Education Alliance. In September the district was presented with requests designed to move the district forward. The next meeting is scheduled for October 28th when the cabinet will respond to these requests. District staff will also be attending a meeting in November to further its understanding of the Harlem Children's Zone. Ms. Jackson-Chalmers acknowledged the background work that has been done by community partners, Family Education Alliance members, Nolene Smith and Barbara Smith, who presented additional information to the board regarding this project.

Ms. Smith presented a request that the district provide support for Giffen Elementary and Arbor Hill Elementary School to replicate parts of the Harlem Children's Zone model to include a 5th and 6th grade institute, which is an after school education enrichment program focused on intense reading and literature. Funding for this particular program would come from the district. The program will be staffed by certified teachers and at least one assistant in each school. Second, to provide space in each of these schools for baby college, which is the initial phase of the Harlem Children's Zone where expectant parents and parents of 2 and 3 year old children are educated about brain development and other aspects of children rearing in preparation for school and life. The district is also being asked to consider redefining the Home School Coordinator positions in the district. Funding for other programs would be sought from other community agencies and the County. Additionally, a request was made for the district to approve district staff members to be a part of the delegation to attend the Harlem Children's Zone upcoming conference on November 9th and 10th.

- There are concerns as to how this initiative will be funded?

This model is a collaborative model where no individual entity is expected to provide funding. However, in order to be qualified to apply for the Promise Neighborhood Initiative, which will be funded at several billion dollars a year, if that passes through the federal budget, \$10 million will be allocated for the planning grant year, there needs to be an educational component in place. The school district is being asked to be that entity. This will be a public/private partnership.

Dr. Colucciello noted representatives from all entities should meet to discuss the issues that have been identified this evening. Given the information the district received earlier today regarding the Governor's budget, the district would be cautious in promising to participate in something that it may not be able to deliver in consideration of the upcoming budget. The presentation tonight is an update of where this project is at this point. As you move forward in the next step that is where all of these questions come in when we are trying to put numbers and staff into the project. The questions are what is the next step? How can we facilitate this process without having to commit large amounts of money?

- More information is needed. Are you looking for the district to start the pilot during the planning phase? Start a program that is the same model as the Harlem Children's Zone to demonstrate that there is a commitment and capacity. What additional asks are you anticipating once the planning grant is obtained.

- Who are the people going to the conference in November?

There are ten people scheduled including principals, community agencies, city people and members of the Family Education Alliance. Individuals are not permitted to register for the conference.

The commitment being sought this evening is the physical space in the two schools for the baby college and the 5th and 6th grade institute.

Policy Review

Policies in Series 0000 were provided for discussion and review. These policies have been reviewed by the Policy Committee. This is the first series recommended by the NYSSBA Policy Analyst. Ms. Jackson Chalmers pointed out revisions in the policies. Policies will be reviewed by counsel. The process is that the board will be provided the policies for review with approval scheduled at the following meeting. Policy District Goals for Student Performance Policy # 0200 has been tabled. Policies will be presented for approval at the next board meeting.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Mackey advised she attended the Gun Violence Task Force last week, which was an organizational meeting. Members selected Dominic Colsolaro as the Chairperson. A nomination was made for Reverend Mueller to be the Vice Chair. The next meeting is scheduled for October 26, 2009. The group will compile a list of all the youth oriented programs in the City. Ms. Mackey will continue to provide updated from this committee to board members.

Ms. Doesschate advised she hosted a meeting relative to Charter Schools. Ms. Doesschate shared basic information about charter school applications and enrollment projections. The group voiced a certain amount of frustration relative to the impact on the school district. The group indicated general agreement on four issues: (1) the district needs to compete with charter schools (2) there should be a cap imposed on enrollment at the present figure (3) honesty in advertising statistics and (4) writing in opposition to applications. Board members commented that NYSUT, the Mayor and other community partners should be working with the district in expressing their opposition to the charter schools. Comments also included the possibility of working with charter schools in terms of violence and stabilizing our communities. There needs to neutral territory with the charter schools to work together with the Gun Violence Task Force and the Harlem Children's Zone.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Dr. Barth distributed post card related to The Laramie Project, which Ward Dales is producing. The production will be staged here in Albany at Albany High School. There has been a lot of investment, issues, emotion brought into presenting this project, Dr. Barth encouraging people to attend the production.

Mrs. Gaffuri requested an updated demographic study. A suggestion was made to review the Grier Report for demographics. There is a Capital Region Planning Commission that can provide this type of information. Board members were in agreement to pursue this issue.

Adjournment

Dr. Barth made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 p.m.