



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**December 1, 2009**  
**7:00 p.m.**  
**Albany High School**

**PRESENT:** Barbara Gaffuri, President  
Melissa Mackey, Vice President  
Judy Doeschate, J.D. Secretary  
Dr. Mark Barth  
Rose Brandon  
Daniel Egan  
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 7:15 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.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

- Mary Kate Mueller, Advisor for the Key Club, introduced officers of the club, President, Alexandra France; Vice President Kyle Arnold; Treasurer, Holly Malerba, and Secretary, Zora Middleton who spoke about the various fund-raising activities the club is engaged in. Presently, they are involved with adopting a family for the holidays
- Ward Dales, Director of The Laramie Project, introduced cast members Rosa Collins, Aaron Moore, Esther Tsygenbaum, Thomas Worden and David Abraham who talked about their experience in this life-changing event. Mr. Dales note the goal of producing the Laramie Project was to create a venue for our school and the community to start to talk about the “isms” that we don’t like to talk about. Leona Thompson organized “Talk Back” and assemblies in the high school, with approximately 1,000 students participating, along with local social service agencies to start to discuss a lot of issues. This has become larger platform to discuss racism, sexism, and other “isms”. Mr. Dales acknowledged the administration and teachers for their support of this effort. Mr. Dales noted that the National Coalition Building Institute presented training for the students involved in this project that gave students the opportunity to explore these issues. Hopefully, the district will be able to bring them back for additional training.
- As promised to the residents of the Stephen & Harriet Myers community, the pool at the school will be made available to the public sometime in January 2010. The district is currently working with members of the City government as a team to put together an opportunity for the community.

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

Student was not able to attend the meeting this evening. A written report was distributed to board members.

**OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Bert Malerba and Nolene Smith addressed the board as representatives of the Family Education Alliance, regarding the district's pre-k program, urging the board to offer Pre-K services to those children in the district who are at high risk and most needy.

**FACILITIES PROJECT**

**Action Items Related to the Facilities Project**

**Approval of Change Orders**

Change orders for Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology, Giffen Memorial Elementary School and Arbor Hill Elementary School were presented for approval. Ms. Mackey made a motion to approve change orders. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

**INFORMATION ITEM**

**A Vision for Tomorrow – Strategy #3**

Dr. McCalla began the presentation with the introduction of the administrative staff at the high school. Attention was focused on Strategies 3.2 Creating Smaller Learning Communities for Albany High School students, and 3.3 the redesign of the high school facility to support the creation of those smaller learning communities. There is presently an opportunity for federal Magnet grant assistance in these two areas. A number of staff and community members have been brought together to start the process of preparing to respond positively to these grant applications. The district will be positioning itself to seek \$7.5 million over a three year period. The anticipated award is approximately four throughout the nation. Twenty-two peoples have been invited to participate in the planning process, including two parents, representatives from UAlbany, The College of St. Rose and Hudson Valley Community College. In addition to staff members the Co-Chairs of this committee are Dr. McCalla, along with Dr. Tresa Diggs and Ms. Pastecki of the Grant's Office. The group has been organized into six sub-committees. An aggressive meeting schedule has been scheduled with six two-hour meetings within the next two weeks in order to respond quickly and positively to the grant application, which is expected to be presented in January or February. The group will be presenting a formal report to the Board of Education upon completion their work. Three essential questions will be studied: closing the achievement gap, improving instruction and personalize learning to improve student achievement. This self-study will identify weaknesses and what the district needs to do to transform the high school. The idea is that the capital plan would follow the programmatic changes agreed to through the grant process. Dr. McCalla noted all relevant materials put forth in previous studies on this issue will be included in the development process.

Dr. Colucciello welcomed board members to participate in the grant planning committee. The next meeting is scheduled for December 7<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m. at Albany High School.

### High School Assessments

Dr. McCalla advised that due to the new changes in NCLB the State designation for the last 6-7 years has been rolled over to the federal city designation of a school that needs improvement without going through the SINI process. What that means is the high school is 2-3 from serious consequences if an improved plan is not in place through the restructuring of the high school program. Dr. McCalla reviewed the high school assessments including ELA scores, Mathematics A & B, Integrated Algebra, Geometry, Global History & Geography, History & Government, Living Environment, Physical Setting/Earth Science, Chemistry & Physics. Also presented were suspensions rates, attendance rates and the VADIR report on the number of incidents that occurred in the high school. Assessment included a comparison of the last three school years. The presentation concluded with a vision for the high school outlined in five separate goals.

- What do you need to meet your goals? What are you willing to give up?

We need to maintain the building at the highest possible level. Immediate repairs include carpet replacement with tiles; renovations of the bathrooms and new lockers in the PE locker room. It is embarrassing when visiting teams come to the school. We need to let students and staff know that they are appreciated and that facilities improvement is important to the district. Technology needs to be updated. Smart boards are essential, along with other items such as LCD projectors.

- What is the current enrollment in the high school?

As of 11/30/09 there were 2000 students in the high school, 2600 for all high school students in the district.

- Is the supervision in the locker rooms all that it could be?

Supervision in the locker rooms has been changed in recent weeks. There is a designated teacher walking around before and after when students come in and out of the locker rooms. A formal schedule is maintained of individuals teachers assigned for each period. Students must scan their ID's before they are permitted to enter the locker rooms.

- How is it that we have come to a place where we accept these kinds of fail rates? What is it that we could do in the next three years to get to a point where there are fewer than 10% failing? Money is not the solution. There are solutions that can be initiated without spending additional dollars by changing how we do things. Administrators are required to visit at least six classrooms a day. Following their visits they collaborate with teachers they review ways the teacher can be more successful. Departmental exams will be instituted. Professional development will be ongoing to instruct teachers on how use the data to change instruction. Representatives from SED are coming to assist the high school in writing comprehensive education plans.

- How are you anticipating where students are falling behind now to keep them from the need to attend summer school?

We are in the process of analyzing failures for the first grading period, subject by subject and teacher by teacher, so that these students can be identified and provided the support they need to be successful.

- What is the link between instructions provided in the classroom as opposed to what information tutors are being told in terms of helping students? At this point there is no structure. There is not a prescriptive approach in place at this time. We are looking into this.

- Is the 5% reduction in staff realistic with all that needs to be accomplished at the high school? There are a number of classes that are under-enrolled. Also, when you move from 8 period to 9 periods last year, there was no adjustments to the teacher's contract. So, teachers are still teaching five classes. As a result, we have lost a lot of instructional power. Normally teachers teach five out of eight or 6 out of nine classes. This is a significant problem in terms of making sure that we have the right staff at an economically feasible amount. That 5% is not an unrealistic figure.
- I would like to hear your thoughts on professional development at some point.

### **ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS**

Routine Consent Items were presented as follow: Proceedings of Meetings, November 4, 2009 , November 19, 2009, Appointments, Stipends, Leaves of Absence, Transfers, Positions Vacated, Correction for 11/4/09, Appointments to Special Education Committees, Committee on Special Education, Subcommittee on Special Education, Committee on Pre-School Special Education, Attendance at Conferences, Authorization to Enter Into Contracts, Treasurer's Report; Revenue Status Report 10/31/09, Appropriation Status Report 10/31/09, Extra Classroom Activity Fund, Budget Transfers under \$10,000, Budget Transfers over \$10,000, Real Property Tax Adjustments; Bid Award, ERATE Contract, Medicaid Consultant Contract. Ms. Mackey set aside proceedings of November 19, 2009. Ms. Doeschate made a motion to approve routine consent items absent those set aside. Mr. Egan seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

Ms. Mackey made a motion to approve proceedings of November 19, 2009. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. Ms. Mackey requested that additional information related to the disparity in numbers of minority staff members in a number of the elementary schools. Additional information will be included in the proceedings.

The board voted (7-0) to approve the proceedings with additional information.

Motion passed.

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Dr. Colucciello and Mr. Hogan presented information related to the budget development process. Information sheets I, II and III were distributed to board members. The budget development calendar indicates that goals and objectives would be discussed. At this point there remains a \$10 million gap in the district budget. The process starts with items listed under immediate action, Mandates, discussion of guidelines and discussion mandates and non-mandated items. A chart indicating mandated items, expanded programs/non-mandated, and finally elective programs at the elementary level. Mandates items are required, expanded programs/non-mandated are not mandated as well as elective programs. The middle level programs were also listed under these same categories as well as secondary programs. Guidelines for program review were presented as an evaluation tool. Board members were invited to include additional criteria for consideration. Dr. Colucciello advised there is no evidence that state Aid will be increased next year. The district is now looking at the possibility of payments being delayed in December. There are cliff-years ahead, years when the economy will not be turning around. What we do is all about the students. The district will develop the best program possible to present to voters in May. Dr. Colucciello invited board members to review the information.

- It would be helpful to know the number of students participating in the Advanced Placement, the Academy of Engineering and the IBO Program. There are some students taking multiple advance placement courses and the district tends to count seats as opposed to the number of students participating. Along with total seats, it would help to have the number of students. This information would be helpful in discussing the possibility of offering courses every other year.
- Regarding National Urban Alliance for Education (NUA) I would like to know how many coaches we have in each building and what the district is currently paying for these services.
- What is the cost for each major activity? What does it cost to provide French at the high school or the Music Program? I'm thinking of the concept of activity based costing. I'm not sure our data will support that.

Specific information can be provided.

- We talked about energy throughout the district.

This information can be provided building by building. The district has also applied for \$500,000 of federal stimulus money to install energy efficient lighting. The district also has a full-time energy person who will provide a listing of what the district has done in the last six months to conserve energy.

- Look at incentives that could be initiated to help save money, i.e. substitutes.
- Some of these programs are getting external money. Can this information be identified?

Information regarding grant funded programs will be provided to board members.

- The listing under guidelines for program review there is no question asking if the program increases academic achievement. Also, the 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet reads is the program currently successful? (% of students passing). This should also include the number of students participating or other measures i.e. a student may be moving from a 1 – 2 on the ELA exam. Also, with what is the community sentiment for the program, include parental input.
- Provide a definition of full service schools.
- What is included in the core instructional program at each level?
- Parental involvement, communication and volunteer coordinator are all expanded programs under District programs.
- Include has the program been evaluated under is the program currently successful.
- Where does guidance fall into this? Are there mandates for guidance?
- There might be county and/or city wide organizations that have programs and are in need of a location to provide the program. What would be the cost to do that to collaborate with the city and county? How will this initiative engage community involvement and the cost?

Board members will be receiving information requested this evening. Discussions will continue on course with the budget development calendar.

### **Board Committee Reports**

The Alternative Education Think Tank met for the first time on 11/30/09. The committee reviewed the mission statement, which was revised to insure that there is a long-term evaluation component, after the committee work is done this summer. The March 31, 2010 preliminary report to the Board of Education is very aggressive. The group has decided that they will work toward that date.

Members received an orientation on existing programs, similar to the previous presentation to board members. A number of sub-committees have been formed and the committee will be expanded to include at least three parents, one at each level, elementary, middle school and high school. There is some discussion related to providing support to insure that the parents could make it to the meetings. Some of things discussed were the provision of bus passes, child care, possibly on a volunteer basis, also, providing a stipend for people to participate, which is questionable. Short term goals for the committee are to do a literature review or best practices early on so that people can agree on what it is we mean when we say alternative education so that everyone is up to speed on the concept. A data need identified is to find a way to track individual students through the programs. One of the obvious questions is are we seeing the same kids in various alternative education programs. The issue of data review and confidentiality will be discussed with technology. The committee is scheduled to meet again in two weeks, meeting every other week.

### **Facilities Committee**

Members of the Facilities Committee and board members participated in a walk-through at TOAST, which will re-open on January 4, 2010. There are minor issues that need to be addressed prior to the opening. Ribbon cutting event is scheduled for February 9, 2010.

### **Policy Committee**

The Policy Committee will meet next week. However, the board will not meet again until January 4, 2010. The New York State School Board has complimented our Board of Education, which is the first board in New York State to complete an entire book of procedures, Essential Operating Procedures. NYSSBA has started to cross-reference the district policies that have procedures associated with them so that when policies are reviewed, the procedures will be referenced. Policies will be reviewed on December 8<sup>th</sup>, the 1000 series.

There are a number of meetings that have been scheduled that conflict with committee meeting dates. Board members are asked to be cognizant of these conflicts. Meetings will be re-scheduled accordingly.

### **Board Member Items**

Dr. Barth noted, with the Board's indulgence, he has postponed his resignation until the end of January, 2010.

Mr. Egan asked that the issue of property taxes be examined by the district, specifically, the accuracy of the tax records, as a future agenda item. Ms. Mackey suggested this issue be discussed with the members of the Audit Committee.

Mr. Morris noted this is the last meeting of the year and extended wishes for a happy holiday to everyone present. Board members joined in this gesture.

Mrs. Brandon expressed appreciation for the student report that Sholanda forwarded in her absence this evening. Ms. Brandon requested that the district address the issues brought forward in the report in an effort to resolve those issues. Mr. Egan noted Sholanda's mention of Falcon Pride and how great it is to hear that.

Ms. Mackey asked for a schedule of the meetings related to the Federal Magnet Grant. A schedule will be forwarded to board members.

**Adjournment**

Dr. Barth made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 p.m.