



**City School District of Albany**  
**PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**October 7, 2010**  
**7:00 p.m.**  
**Albany High School**

**PRESENT:** Dan Egan, President  
Rose Brandon, Secretary  
Barbara Gaffuri  
Edith Leet  
Melissa Mackey  
Wayne Morris

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

**ABSENT:** 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**

Mr. Lesko introduced Preston Williams, a student who represented Albany High School in a taped radio announcement as part of our back-to-school attendance campaign. Jovaughna Honeyghan, Meredith O'Connell and Jaquan Williams, also students at Albany High School, were recognized for their participation in the District's media announcement of the magnet grant.

Dr. Colucciello announced that the District has received outstanding news that the District is the recipient of \$7.5 million grant to restructure Albany High School. Additional grants will be forthcoming based on the District being recognized as a District that is able to make change. Mr. Honeywell noted that any time a District receives grant money, it is always great news. However, in response to an inquiry as to whether or not this money could be used to reduce school taxes, Mr. Honeywell advised that there are specific guidelines in terms how the money is spent. There is no mechanism under the Education Law, at this point in time, that allows the District to return money back to taxpayers after the tax rate has been set. The law requires that this money should be considered to offset taxes for the coming year in the budget development process.

Dr. Colucciello gave an overview of an unfortunate incident that occurred earlier this week related to a student that was left on a school bus that went on to the McDonalds on Central Avenue. The driver left the bus and left the bus door opened. The student exited the bus and was found wandering along Central Avenue. The student was returned to her home school by a person who saw her and asked where she went to school. The child was unharmed. Mr. Hogan presented a listing of guidelines and training to all school bus drivers, particularly checking vacant buses to make sure that all students have been delivered to their destination. New procedures have been established for bus drivers.

The District will continue working closely with Durham to insure the safety of every student in the District. The District's Transportation Supervisor will log a minimum number of observations of bus drivers and videos that include child checks and student behaviors. Greeters will be meeting buses and log-in students. The driver who did not perform the mandated check has been terminated.

### **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE**

Mr. Egan introduced Jon Thompson, a senior at Albany High School, who will be filling the position of Student Representative for the current school year. Jon is a member of the Boys and Girls Club in Albany. He is an athlete. He participates in a number of school clubs. He serves as a tutor at TOAST. He was elected Junior Class President and he is currently running for President of the Senior Class. Jon expressed his enthusiasm in serving in this position.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Dr. Bruce Roter, parent of three students in the Albany Schools, one of which was the student that was found on Central Avenue. Dr. Roter noted he and his wife met with the Superintendent to discuss the situation. Compliance and human error need to be revisited and reviewed to prevent this from happening again.

2. Maria Gallo addressed the Board related to transportation issues involving non-verbal, autistic students. The dismissive attitude of the bus company needs to be addressed.

3. Marlon Anderson addressed the Board relative to the restructuring of Albany High School and the District's responsibility to educate every student.

4. Linette Gibb addressed the Board related to her special needs student who has been dropped off from the bus alone, with no one to meet her and the use of restraints on the bus.

Mr. Egan expressed his sincere apologies for these incidents and advised that these issues would be resolved.

### **INFORMATION**

#### **High Improvement Plan**

The Board of Education was provided a comprehensive report related to the high school improvement plan. Albany high school student, Rashada Hemingway Pounds, Alicia Abdul, high school librarian and Mr. Panetta, Safe Schools Principal, provided information related to what is different at Albany High School. The group spoke about the improvements in the building itself providing a brighter atmosphere, teachers who are more attentive to students, improved technology throughout the building with the use of Smart Boards, teachers are capturing the attention of the students, students are participating in physical education options, and teachers are getting to identify and know students with the closed campus. Dale Getto, Principal for School Improvement, spoke about the parent's reactions to changes that are in place, all of which are positive. Mr. Panetta, Assistant House Principal, talked about a 3 Tiered Approach with Tier I: Universal Protocols, Tier II: Targeted Interventions and Tier III: Individual Interventions to increase school attendance.

- Has the situation where the library is not always available to students due to activities that are scheduled in the library been rectified?

The portion of the library previously used for such meetings is now a computer lab. Classroom instruction is able to go on in the back of the room, when activities are taking place in the front. The library is open from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The library is available to students throughout the day.

- What role do you see for the high school library?

Computers in the library have been updated. There is a need for additional computers. Publish monthly newsletters. Each period there are anywhere between 30-40 students. The library provides considerable support to students who are researching colleges.

- Student's comments about conditions at Albany High School are very important. Every student should have the opportunity to provide feedback, anonymously, if possible. If this could be a school-wide effort in each classroom, that students could place comments in a box in the classrooms.

Student involvement in this is very important.

- How can parents and community members become involved in this restructuring process?

There is a meeting scheduled for October 19<sup>th</sup>, where sub committees will report out the work to date. Dr. McCalla is working on this.

- The JIT recommended classroom observations. How is it going and how is it being received by the teachers.

Visitations and observations are taking place. They have been very positive. The vertical articulation of certain subject matters is impressive. There are opportunities for changes.

- What differences are being seen in the actions of middle management personnel to be proactive?

The curriculum was rolled out at Department meetings. Instructional Supervisors have met with individual teachers to discuss the impact of the JIT report. Also, there is more communication between the building administrator team and the instructional supervisors. Faculty study groups are being formed that will involve the supervisors.

- Although attendance is getting better, how will we continue to increase attendance?

The due diligence in terms of record keeping and being able to find students has definitely helped. Students are now being counted in real time.

- How many teachers are using Power School?

This is a two-prong approach. Teachers are taking attendance every day with Power School. One of the teachers will be doing professional development in helping teachers to use the grading piece of Power School.

Dr. Colucciello noted the District promised the community that there would be changes at Albany High School this year. The attitude has changed. Students are anxious to be proud of their school and their work. Teachers are anxious to be successful. Grade for the first five weeks will be very important. The District will be looking at grade by school, by class and by student. The physical plant changes have helped and the attitude change has also contributed to the change in atmosphere. Dr. Colucciello thanked the leadership of everyone involved for their efforts in changing the climate at the high school.

- Have changes been made at Abrookin?

Daily attendance reflects Abrookin and ALC. Abrookin is part of the improvement project.

- Has consistent grading been reviewed?

Yes, there is a group that will be looking at this issue.

- Are the Harriet Gibbons housed in one house?

They are in the general student population. Students with problems last year are hooked up with caring adults in the building who can assist them in facing difficulties.

## **FACILITIES PROJECT**

### **Approval of Change Orders**

Change orders for Arbor Hill Elementary School were presented for approval. Mr. Morris made a motion for approval. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. Mr. Egan questioned the cost of painting. This was the art storage room that included three separate spaces and the preparation of the walls prior to painting.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

### **Approval of CS Arch Contract for Design/Engineering**

A contract with CS Arch for design/engineering related to the high school project was submitted for approval. Mr. Morris made a motion for approval. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

### **Resolution to Approve Schematic Designs/Albany High School**

Ms. Mackey made a motion for approval. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. Mr. McMordie reviewed the schematic design at Albany High School. This is part of the renovation project that was approved by voters last May to address health and wellness issues in the school. The scope being presented this evening is for summer work. The flooring has been completed except for the third floor. This will be completed over the winter and spring breaks. Mr. McMordie reviewed the list of high priorities, including additional carpets in the classrooms, replacing ceilings, replacing locker and select interior doors, partial roof replacement, approximately 15 restroom renovations, locker rooms in the pool area will be renovated, select windows in the building, installation of doors in the restrooms, addressing heating and ventilation in a number of units that are in the worst condition. Mr. McMordie reviewed a number of issues that will not be addressed in this renovation. Alternates will also be proposed in consideration of available funds. With approval this evening, construction documents will be submitted to SED by November 1, bidding in the first part of the year, followed by construction. The approval this evening will include the schematic designs and the submission of documents to SED. The members of the Facilities Committee have recommended approval.

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

Motion passed.

## **ROUTINE CONSENT**

Routine Consent items were presented for approval as follow:

Appointments (Probationary Appointments, Reappointments, Miscellaneous, Substitute Appointments); Transfers; Resignations/Retirements/Terminations; Leaves of Absence; Field Trips; Attendance at Conferences; Treasurer's Report; Budget Transfers over \$10,000; Budget Transfers under \$10,000; Revenue Status Report- 08/31/10; Appropriation Status Report – 08/31/10; Real Property Tax Adjustments; Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund; Authorization to Enter Into Contracts (see attached schedule); NYS Small City School Districts Hussein vs. State of New York Litigation; Capital Area School Development Association – Affiliation Fee; Resolution to Extend Assistant Superintendents' Contracts; Committee on Pre-School Special Education; Committee on Special Education; Subcommittee on Special Education. Mrs. Leet made a motion for approval. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. Mr. Egan asked to set aside the field trips for the Ski Club.

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

Motion passed.

Ms. Mackey made a motion to approve field trips. Mr. Morris seconded the motion. Mr. Egan questioned whether or not the transportation and equipment rental fees are paid for by the District or the students participating in the Ski Club. Pending clarification of this issue, Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to table approval of the field trip. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Enrollment/Staffing**

Mr. Cioffi gave a comprehensive report on school enrollment in the District for elementary schools, middle schools, and the high school, including the percentage of increases by school, enrollment guidelines, and staffing adjustments. Figures for the last four years were included in the report. District enrollment has increases from 8,436 in 2007-2008 to 8,621 for 2010-2011. Attendance rates for the elementary and middle schools were presented along with attendance rates for the high school in 2009 and 9/23, 9/30 and 10/4 by grade. Attendance at the high school has increased from 84.89% in 2009 to 90.45% as of 10/4/10.

- Students are not eligible to enter the GED program until a year after they were supposed to graduate. Does the District do any outreach to those students to follow through in the GED program?

We do interface with program offered by the City. If the District does not track them, they affect the District's dropout rate.

- Is the count of 30 students in the 9-12 classes normal?

The numbers vary. The District is in range of other schools. Based on the number of reductions made this year, the impact is concerning. The District continues to make adjustments to class enrollment.

- This information indicates that there are a lot more families coming into the District.
- The reassignment of teachers does put a burden on teachers in terms of preparation for a new school year, suddenly being moved to another subject area.

Based on contractual agreements, those teachers are given time to prepare for a new assignment.

### **Policy Review**

Ms. Jackson-Chalmers presented policies recommended by the Policy Committee for Board review.

- 2265 Shared Decision-Making and School Based Planning
- 2410 Policy Development, Adoption, Implementation and Review
- 2510 New Board Member Orientation
- 2520 Board Member Training
- 2521 School Board Conferences, Conventions, Workshops
- 2710 Communication Among Individual Board Members

Mrs. Jackson-Chalmers gave a brief overview of the policies. Ms. Mackey noted a change has been made related to mandatory Board member training. This will be reviewed prior to submission for approval. Policies will be presented at the next meeting for approval.

### **Board Committees**

The Audit Committee met for a review of the 2009-2010 financial statements with the Bondaio Group, the District's outside auditor. The audit went well in terms of procedures. There were no major findings. There generated a surplus for the year. Financial statements will be presented to the Board for approval.

The Alternative Education Committee held its first quarterly meeting. The group has self-selected into small groups. One of the groups will continue to serve as an advisory group, with another a safe schools group that will look at violators and practices around those types of students and how that group will continue to interface with the restructuring committee. Notes from that meeting will be forwarded to Board members.

**Board Member Items**

Ms. Brandon asked that the District look into awarding certificates to those students who score 3's and 4's in their assessment tests.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 10:10 p.m.