



**CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF ALBANY  
PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
November 18, 2010  
7:00 p.m.  
Stephen & Harriet Myers Middle School**

**PRESENT:** Dan Egan, President  
Rose Brandon, Secretary  
Barbara Gaffuri  
Edith Leet  
Melissa Mackey  
Dr. Raymond Colucciello  
Bill Hogan  
Dr. Tresa Diggs  
Linda Rudnick  
Linda Jackson-Chalmers

**ABSENT:** Wayne Morris

**Call to Order:**

- Meeting was called to order at 7:10 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.

Mr. Egan called for a motion to amend the agenda to include the Curriculum Committee under Discussion. Ms. Mackey made the motion. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Mr. Lesko introduced Robert Cosgrove, a senior at Albany High School who will be the lead mallet percussionist in the New York State School Music Association's All-State Conference orchestra concert this December. Robert beat out hundreds of other percussionists from around the state to earn the spot.

**OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Gwendolyn Quickley, representing Grandmothers for Charter Schools, addressed the Board relative to charter school tuition payments made by the District. Ms. Quickley also spoke about the resolution approved by the Board regarding text messages to the Board President.
2. Jim Lembo, President of the City Council PTA, addressed the Board regarding the leadership of the City Council PTA. New officers, along with Mr. Lembo, include Ginnie Farrell as VP, Cheryl Cahill as Treasurer, and Christina Wiley as Secretary. President's and Principal's Dinner and Founder's Day are tentatively scheduled for January 19, 2011 and May 14, 2011 respectively.

### **ROUTINE CONSENT**

The following Routine Consent items were presented for approval. Appointments (Probationary, Teaching Assistants, Out of Title, Miscellaneous, Stipends, Coaching 2010-2011, Itinerant Certified Substitute, Itinerant Uncertified Substitute); Leave of Absence, Resignations, Authorization to Enter Into Contracts. Ms. Mackey made a motion for approval. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve routine consent items.

Motion passed.

Mr. Egan introduced Susan McCarthy as the newly appointed School Health Coordinator.

### **INFORMATION**

#### **Attendance Zones**

Mr. Ken Cioffi gave a comprehensive update on the Attendance Zone Committee. The presentation began with a listing of the membership and meeting schedule of the committee. Information provided to the committee for review, included enrollment capacity, September graduation, grade level configuration, street listings, current school zones, Board policies, City of Albany map and previous Board presentations. Mr. Cioffi showed a map using Map Point software, indicating the student body of the Philip Schuyler School, the address of each student, if they are special education students, along with other demographic information provided in the program.

The group has had extensive discussions related to where the population for each school comes from, how the District will determine swing streets, Magnet school policies for neighborhood preference, neighborhood zones, a lottery for neighborhood schools, whether or not the District can adjust boundaries and the associated costs, the number of students currently being transported to and from school, and other factors such as achievement or special population to balance class size.

Next steps include reviewing maps and special education population, reaching out to other districts, develop recommendations, hosting several public forums to get input on recommendations, look at transportation costs, safety zones, natural barriers, and make recommendations. Mr. Cioffi advised it will be very important to establish a time line for review of attendance zones every three to five years. It is anticipated that recommendations will be presented to the Board in late January or February.

- Elaborate on balancing schools.  
There were classes this year with 25 to 30 students. Balancing schools would keep class sizes even throughout the District. The majority of parents want their children to go to school with neighborhood kids.
- What impact will the revitalization of housing in the City have on enrollment?  
The demographics based on data from the 2000 census. More updated information is not yet available.
- Input from the community is critical. Please forward the schedule as soon as possible.  
Input from Principals and the public are very important. Historically, the most important factor is neighborhood.

- Public education means equal opportunity and no one is turned away. We need more community involvement. If possible are there reports from other Districts that could be shared as information related to pitfalls.

We have reached out to neighboring District and are waiting for responses related to their experiences.

### **Virtual Learning**

Mark Place, Technology Coordinator for the District, gave a presentation on virtual learning in the District, offering online classes to students. The District has previously used Nova-Net which had been used at the alternative education sites for credit recovery. A Virtual Learning Committee was created and given the charge to explore the expansion of virtual learning at the high school and secondary alternative learning centers. Mr. Place noted that the expectation is that every graduating student in the District will have completed at least one virtual learning course in preparation for college level courses.

Virtual learning has two areas of focus (1) credit recovery, and (2) initial credit. While the State Education Department has approved the use of virtual learning for credit recovery, it has not yet approved course credit. However, approval is expected shortly. The Committee was adamant that they want to do this correctly the first time and provide a solid program that addresses both focuses. The expectation is that a pilot credit recovery program will be in place in September starting with the TOPS and Transition programs. The District has already purchased 100 seats of the program “Apex Learning”. This product provides diversity. Course structure can be provided at the ALC that duplicates high school courses. Professional development is a very important piece of this program. With the SIG Grant, the District has planned for 100 additional seats at Albany High School (AHS). If the program is successful in the fall semester, the District will be able to add seats, expanding the program quickly. Any initial course credit offerings will be offered following the curriculum work related to the restructuring at AHS.

Ms. Mauri Davis-Lewis, a teacher at the Adult Learning Center, shared her experience with this program in her classes. This program is very user friendly and very flexible. The program can be customized for each student. When students arrive at the alternative learning center, they are able to pick up a program at the same point they were at the high school. Students have been able to access the program from home. The program needs to be managed in terms of the number of licenses available. Individual student data can be archived so that licenses are available for additional students.

Mr. Place advised the program is being monitored to determine the impact on learning and what are the stumbling blocks teachers and students are experiencing before moving forward. By the end of the first semester and beginning of the second semester every teacher at TOPS and the high school transition program will be using this program on a regular basis. Supports will be offered to assist teachers in preparing for this program. Mr. Place noted that research indicates this program has been effective in schools that are using the program.

- How much time does it take for the teacher to individualize the program? Can a student plug into the program at home and while they are in in-school suspension?

Customization can be done quickly. Students will be able to access the program from home. It is important for the teacher to be familiar with the student’s skill level.

- Students have to be self-motivated. Students who are having difficulty may not have the motivation or discipline needed.

The teacher is very much a part of the instruction, with extra prompting.

- Have we thought about the possibility of using this program for AIS?

The District is looking to see if there is a way to incorporate a large percentage of the student body and expand to 500 licenses using grant monies.

- There should be a balance between AP courses and AIS to address those students who are in need of additional support.
- What do teachers think about this program?

Those who are using the program regularly have taken ownership. They have loaded student data and created their own courses. Teachers are impressed that it is easy to use.

### **Middle School Progress Reports**

Dr. Diggs introduced Michael Paolino, Kim Wilkins and Leslie Buff, Principals of Hackett Middle School, Meyers Middle School and North Albany Academy respectively. The reports focused on Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Diagnostic Assessment and Curriculum work that has taken place within their buildings.

- Have discussions taken place between the elementary teachers and the middle school teachers related to the interval assessment data?

There have been meetings to discuss the data and the importance of students being prepared for middle school and as gaps are identified, that information is provided to the elementary teachers.

- How did students do at the first making period?

Reports cards went out late this week. Information will be available early next week.

- Are AIS students getting enough support?
- This is an opportunity to find a way to get students reading at grade level.
- You have to look at Pre-K and Kindergarten students. See what's happening on that level.

Dr. Colucciello advised Board members will be receiving first quarter results from the high and the middle schools, by grade level, by subject area, the number of students passing and failing. There are concerning issues relative to the numbers of students who are failing at the end of the first quarter. Every guidance counselor will receive a listing of the students they are responsible for. This information will be forwarded at the end of each quarter. Dr. Colucciello also suggested that Board members might want to look at a promotion policy. It will be a challenge. Once a policy is adopted, implementing that policy will be challenging. Students need to understand that teachers and staff are there to assist them. The administration is here to assist and support teachers so they can assist and support students.

- Does graduation from your middle school mean that the student is prepared to do 9<sup>th</sup> grade work?

No. This led to the suggestion for the need of a promotion policy and standards.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Physical Education – Athletic Option Program**

Ms. Ryan presented a draft proposal that is in alignment with SED regulations, indicating that the District would exempt seniors who are participating in varsity sports programs from taking physical education classes.

- Why is this program only being offered to seniors? What about juniors who are playing varsity sports?

A suggestion was made to revisit this practice to determine how many students participate in this program. We should encourage students to participate in this program. Also, the District needs to identify those students who are three sport athletes, who may not participate in gym for a good part of the year.

- What happens to the student's grade during that period of time?

Students do not get any credit for varsity sports. Physical Education focuses on students engaging in activities to stay physically fit.

### **Budget Committee**

Mr. Egan referred to a proposal document on the formation of a Community-Based Budget Committee. The Audit Committee met to discuss the formation of this committee. With Board approval, the Budget Committee will be established for the purpose of educating the public in the area of public school finance, which will enhance the ability of members of the community to understand and effectively participate in the District's annual budget process. The Audit Committee is suggesting that the District reach out to the members of the Common Council to participate or recommend someone to participate on this committee to insure that there is representation from all wards in the City.

- What will be required from the membership on this committee in order to educate the public?

The workshops will provide a baseline of knowledge so that when they attend the budget meetings, they are able to effectively pass on information to the public.

- Will there be a structured program of this committee to instruct the public?

Materials will be made available to pass on to the public.

- It is important that the public, and the electorate, is educated relative to the public understanding the State Aid Formula and the Campaign for Fiscal Equity.

The two workshops will give people a baseline of knowledge so that when they attend Board/Budget meetings they can better understand the process, etc. so that they can go forward and inform and answer questions from the public. These workshops will also be open meetings, providing opportunity for the public to also attend and observe. The hope is that these people would go back to their community and pass on this information to the public. This will also give the Board another link in the budget process by having the committee representatives share information from the public to the Board.

- In addition, representatives from the schools should also be included.

### **Curriculum Committee**

Mr. Egan referred to the draft outline of the Curriculum Committee for Board input.

- A suggestion was made to include under Statement of Purpose an additional bullet that states the committee will look at the grade level requirements per grade and the promotion policy.

- Under membership, there should also be teachers on this committee.

Teachers from each level will be invited to join the committee.

- Meetings should be publicized and open to the public.

All committee meetings are open to the public to attend as observers.

- The District needs to look at uniformity throughout the District, including standardized grading.

- Under objectives #4 should indicate programs rather than buildings.

- Under objectives, #6 should be included to read, "Review efficiency and success of AIS programs".

- An Assistant Superintendent would be able to oversee the objectives of this committee.
- A suggestion was made to change the wording to district-wide rather than Albany Public Schools.

The consensus of the Board is to move forward with the suggestions and staff the committee in January.

### **Buildings & Grounds Committee**

Mr. Hogan advised there are numerous buildings throughout the District. The high school will be making changes in the near future. A draft outline of a Buildings & Grounds Committee was presented for review. The purpose of the committee is to oversee and identify needs and initiatives dealing with the physical plant and grounds of the District. The group will meet four times a year. Membership will include one Board member.

Following discussion, a suggestion was made to relook at the Facilities Committee with the thought of expanding the Facilities Committee to include the charge of the proposed Buildings & Grounds Committee. This item will be brought forward at a future meeting for additional discussion.

### **BOARD COMMITTEES**

Dr. Diggs advised the large group Alt Ed Committee met last week. Subcommittee reports were presented, including the restructuring subcommittee that made a recommendation for more social, emotional intervention built into the small learning communities, in addition to those in the grant. Additionally, a recommendation was to have what students would call a “safe room” in each house, where students who are having difficulty during the course of the day can self-refer themselves to this room to work with someone to calm down or to get additional support to complete their day. The large group will meet again on January 10, 2011 to discuss interventions for disruptive students in the classroom.

The Charter School Committee met last week to discuss recruitment efforts and review last year successes, and planning next year’s activities.

### **BOARD MEMBER ITEMS**

A request was made to investigate the possibility of allowing community service credit for students who serve on committees. A criteria, etc. will need to be put in place to administer this type of program. It would be a program monitored by the District, authorized by the Board.

Following discussion it was suggested that a copy of the revised I.D. Policy at Albany High School be included in the report card mailing to student’s homes.

Ms. Mackey requested that, as part of the budget process next year, the Board members be provided an assessment of Title I Funds that are specifically earmarked for after school programs, whether or not they have an educational component attached to them, and the actual count of student participation across the District. So that the use of Title I monies can be reviewed in depth to determine if these funds are being used as they were originally intended.

Mr. Egan noted there will be a presentation tomorrow at the SUNY downtown campus at 1:30 p.m. on Community Responsibility for School Success at the Arthur Levitt Room. Mr. Egan encouraged people to attend if their schedule allows.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Brandon seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cutting