



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

May 19, 2011

7:00 p.m.

Pine Hills Elementary School

PRESENT: Dan Egan, President
Rose Brandon, Vice President
Barbara Gaffuri, Secretary
Felicia Green
Edith Leet
Melissa Mackey
Alexandra Streznewski
Dr. Raymond Colucciello
Bill Hogan
Dr. Tresa Diggs
Linda Rudnick
Linda Jackson-Chalmers
Ken Cioffi

ABSENT: Barbara Gaffuri

Call to Order:

- Meeting was called to order at 7:20 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 made a motion to amend the agenda to include under Routine Consent:

- Resignation of Alice Kirkley effective June 30, 2011, and approval of the agreement between the City School District of Albany and Alice Kirkley dated May 13, 2011, and authorize the Superintendent of Schools and Board President to execute the agreement on behalf of the District.
- Resignation of Nathan Pierce effective June 30, 2011, and approval of the agreement between the City School District of Albany and Nathan Pierce dated May 16, 2011, and authorizes the Superintendent of Schools and Board President to execute the agreement on behalf of the District.

Motion was seconded by Ms. Streznewski.

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

Motion passed.

Ms. Mackey made a motion to amend the agenda to include a 20 minute discussion to determine whether or not the majority of the Board is in agreement, based on the best practices developed in the Alt Ed committee and the recommendations from CSSR, to charge the Alt Ed Think Tank with redesigning the ACL, e.g. TOPS and MsAPS, defining a process of developing Personal Education Plans for every student, and a receive of the Code of Conduct policy to be in line with the District's educational goals, to being the group back on track. Ms. Green seconded the motion. Board members noted that staff is not prepared to discuss this item at this time. Mr. Egan suggested this be place on a future agenda.

The Board voted 3 ayes and 3 nays.

(Dan Egan, Dr. Brandon, and Ms. Streznewski were opposed.)

Motion failed.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Ron Lesko introduced teachers, Michelle Lee and Deann Lynch, who were joined by students, Cierra Black, Deforest Schaffer, Joanne Counsuella, and Angel and Ameliana Jackson (Grade 6). The students participated in an after-school drama program that culminated in anti-bullying play/musical/sing-along called "Room for Us All", which they performed for the school in later April. The play was developed using the NUA strategies. Students learned important changes about treating people.

Also part of the superintendent's report included recognition of two members of the Walden Chamber Players, Christof Huebner and Ashima Scripp. A private grant brought this world-class classical group to the City School District of Albany. The Boston-based musicians have spent a week and a month for the past three months at Albany School of Humanities, William S. Hackett School and Albany High School, teaching students about chamber music and its role in the arts, history and society in general. The culmination of their work will be presented at a concert later this week. They also held coaching and rehearsal classes with students. Dr. Colucciello expressed gratitude to Ms. Kubisch for her efforts in bringing this group to our schools.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Reverend Willie J. Stoval, Reverend Victor Collier, Kenesha Victory and Fidelia Rodriguez addressed the Board regarding the lack of proper charter school payments by the District. Charter school students are being treated unfairly and are being deprived of programs because of the lack of funds. This is unfair and unlawful.
2. Bert Malerba addressed the Board regarding the Alt Ed Think Tank. The Think Tank prepared the Board for what was in the JIT Report. The District cannot risk losing those people who have served on this committee and others that have contributions to add to the community. The Districts needs to start ongoing dialogue throughout the community.
3. Ginny Farrell commented that the negative flyer regarding taxes, that was mailed to the residents of Albany, noting that this is not okay. Charter school money is being spent on those postcards, etc. asking voter to vote against the school budget. That is not how public funds should be spent.

INFORMATION

Special Education Presentation

The Board of Education was presented a comprehensive review of Special Education by Debby Sharpe, Director of Special Education, Michelle Bridgewater, Assistant Director of Special Education, and Darlene King, CSR Chairperson. Ms. Sharpe spoke about data overview, and programs and services. Ms. Bridgewater spoke about response to intervention (RtI), and Ms. King spoke about the Committee on Special Education (CSE) process. District data included a total of 1,735 students designated as special ed, 81 in charter schools, 41 in private /parochial schools, 107 in BOCES/QUESTAR, 152 in day treatment and 9 residential placements. Non-residential special ed students total 35. RtI Pushes and Pulls, Federal Law Support of RtI and Core Principles of RtI were identified.

The group continued with integrated system model (Academic/Behavioral) and Special Education in an RtI Framework, Ms. King reviewed the CSE referral process and factors to be considered in determining eligibility for Special Education. The remainder of the presentation included classification trend data, regulations, references and supports, continuum of education services, changes for 2011-2012 and department priorities.

- Does the cost of providing services increase as additional services are provided?

Services begin at minimal costs and increase as services increase.

- Are students screened before they enter kindergarten?

All students are screened when they enter kindergarten in September.

- Is the student's day interrupted when they travel to another site for services?

The District works with parents not to interrupt the student's day, keeping cost in mind.

- How are students identified as learning disabled?

The District looks at the student's I.Q. Score and then how far below they are from their peers in terms of grade level. There has to be a discrepancy between those two before a student could be identified, per federal regulations.

- How is data collected?

Aimsweb is a progress monitoring tool that gives the District the screening data that identifies students who are far below grade level and need to be targeted right away, along with the ability to monitor other students. It also enables the District to include in the data the interventions that the student already received. Teachers will be inputting the information.

- Does BOCES provide what the District does not?

Students who go to BOCES have significant behavioral issues. There is also one program for students with significant mental health needs. This program has a CDPC clinic as part of the program. Medically fragile students are also part of BOCES programs. There are small settings with intervention teams available.

- What accounts for the significant decrease in the number of referrals this year compared to last year?

Last year there were a significant number of referrals from out of the District and charter schools.

- Do we see the same throughout grade levels?

That information can be provided. There is a bubble from second to third, and third to fourth grades, with increased academic demands, when the students are expected to work more independently.

- How will RtI be used to help the District decrease the number of IEP Diplomas and the number of designations?

Those two issues are related to student achievement. Aimsweb affords the opportunity to put data together in a context where the District can be reflective in its practice and also enable the District to target interventions in a way that previously used systems have not been able to do. The District will have more data than ever to target students that should be receiving intervention.

- Is RtI going to be used at the high school level in any way?

The high school is beginning to talk about the RtI process. Myers has a pilot program, and conversations have started with the middle schools.

- Students need to be fully informed and understand the limits of an IEP Diploma in terms of future choices.

- How do we empower parents at CSE meetings?

When parents are working with outside agencies we encourage them to be representatives of the agency to the meeting and many do. Parent membership at the committee meetings is an issue. Many parents are not available when needed.

- Are there times when a CSE meeting is conducted without a parent present?

Parents sometimes call ahead and ask that we proceed without them. There are times when the District has made several attempts to contact the parent and they still don't attend. Initial referrals have a parent or guardian present.

- Is the total number of students with disabilities city-wide a total of 1,735, plus the 395 or is the 1,735 the total figure?

The grand total is 1,735.

- Is it possible to get a total of students by school for this year?

Yes.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Routine Consent items were presented for approval as follow: Appointments (Miscellaneous); Transfers; Leave of Absence; Retirements/Resignations; Revised 2011-2012 School Calendar; Field Trip; Resolution to Approve Charter School Hearing; Resolution to Continue Contracts with CSSR & CASDA; Resolution to Approve Summer School Tuition Rates; Membership Dues (National School Boards Association, NYS Association of Small City School Districts, Inc.; Authorization to Enter Into Contracts.

Ms. Green made a motion to accept Routine Consent. Ms. Streznewski seconded the motion. Mrs. Leet asked to set aside the school calendar. Ms. Mackey asked to set aside the Resolution to Continue the Contract with CSSR and CASDA.

Mr. Egan noted that there were two additions to Routine Consent Items: Resignations and agreements between the District and Alice Kirkley and Nathan Pierce.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the motion absent those items set aside.
Motion passed.

Ms. Streznewski made a motion to approve the revised 2011-2012 school calendar. Mr. Egan seconded the motion, Mrs. Leet made a motion to change the April 5, 2012 Board meeting to April 4, 2012. April is a holyday when church services are held in the evening. Ms. Green seconded the motion. Ms. Streznewski noted in the past there have been Board meetings that conflict with religious holydays. Following discussion, Mrs. Leet modified the motion to table this item until the next meeting. Ms. Streznewski seconded the modified motion.

The Board voted 5 aye and 1 absention. Ms. Green abstained,
Item tabled until the next meeting.

Ms. Streznewski made a motion to approve the Resolution to continue the Contracts with CSSR and CASDA. Ms. Green seconded the motion. Ms. Mackey indicated that the District has a number of contracts with different consultants and this group is doing a lot of good work.<s. Mackey noted that the District often contracts with consultants and does not follow through with their recommendations, Ms. Mackey encouraged the District and Board member to be open to what these groups bring forward.

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

2011-2012 Budget

Mr. Egan noted that this item was included on the agenda in consideration of the budget not receiving voter approval. With the passage of the budget, there is no need for additional discussion unless the Board members have comments. Ms. Mackey reminded Board members that the vote was very close and in spite of the negative campaign, the District still has a lot of work to do. The District needs to be aware of every dollar that is spent. The budget was adopted and passed at \$206.5 million. The District then received a concession from the teachers of \$1.8 million. At that point the budget showed a deficit of \$1.8 million, which would have resulted in a tax increase. With the concession, the tax increase is zero percent. The District will do forward with a budget of \$204.7 million. The tax levy will remain the same as last year. Dr. Colucciello noted the Board would set the tax rate in August. Library taxes will be included in the school tax bill. Dr. Brandon noted the cooperation from the APSTA bargaining unit played a significant role in coming to a zero percent increase in school taxes. Dr. Brandon expressed her gratitude to Ms. Corbo and other teachers.

DISCUSSION

Policies

The following policies were presented for review:

- 6000 Fiscal Management Goals
- 6110 Budget Planning
- 6110R Budget Planning Regulations
- 6150 Budget Transfers
- 6210 Utility Tax
- 6211 Interest on Unpaid Taxes
- 6215 Reduction in Assessments for People Over 65 Years of Age
- 6255 Gifts and Grants
- 6600 Fiscal Accounting and Reporting
- 6640 Fixed Assets (Inventories)
- 6650 Claims Auditor
- 6660 Internal/External Auditors

Ms. Jackson- Chalmers noted the Policy Committee met last week and reviewed the policies that had already been reviewed by the Audit Committee.

6000 – Fiscal Management Goals

Ms. Green suggested that #8 include “and members of the Board of Education” after the word taxpayers....

6110 Budget Planning

Ms. Green suggested that the first sentence include “in consultation with the Board of Education”. Ms. Green also suggested a bullet be included after the last sentence in the first paragraph to read “key information should be provided to the Board”.

6110R Budget Planning Regulations

Ms. Green suggested that following the third bullet should include “Baseline information will be provided to the Board of Education in January.”

6600 Fiscal Accounting and Reporting

Ms. Green suggested the first sentence in paragraph three include “for all accounts”....

Ms. Streznewski questioned the lack of inclusion of the Community Budget Committee in these policies. Mr. Hogan noted that this committee is appointed each year. This is not a required committee. Dr. Colucciello suggested including a broad statement in #8 of 6000 Fiscal Management Goals. Following discussion a suggestion was made to bring this policy back to the Policy Committee and/or Audit Committee for their consideration of whether or not to include the Budget Advisory Committee in the policy. Comments and or edits should be forwarded to Ms. Jackson-Chalmers. Those policies requiring additional review will be brought back to the committee. The remaining policies will be brought forward at the next meeting for approval.

ACTION

Certified Vote Canvass

Mrs. Leet made a motion to accept the Certified Tally from the May 17, 2011 School Vote. Ms. Streznewski seconded the motion, Tally was presented as follows:

	YES	NO	TOTAL
Budget	3,555	3,382	6,937
Sale of 270	5,605	1,195	6,800
Price Adjustment of Philip Livingston	5,682	1,012	6,694
Construction Project	3,725	2,909	6,634
Library Budget	3,439	3,578	7,017
Library Candidates			
Donna Dixon			3,383
Felix Mendoza			1,408
Jose Lopez			1,318
Timothy D. Smith			2,706

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

Motion passed

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Facilities Committee

The Facilities Committee met earlier this week and discussed three items, The first item discussed is the courtyard walkway at Albany High School that is very uneven. A teacher was recently seriously injured at that location. The walkway will be replaced at a cost of \$300,000 - \$350,000. This will be completed as soon as possible due to the safety issue. Mrs. Gaffuri made a motion to table Board Committee Reports to the next meeting. Dr. Brandon seconded the motion.

Improvements will be made to the tennis courts, including resurfacing, new fencing and other improvements. The cost of \$75,000 will come from the current Albany High School Project.

A new electronic sign will be placed at the entrance of the high School at a cost of \$17,000-\$22,000. The present sign presents a safety issue in bad weather when staff is putting the schedule, standing on a ladder.

Discussion also included changing the addition at the high school from the left side to the right side of the building. This change would result in additional space on the second floor, improving the layout of the academies. Mr. Peckham is investigating this possibility. Changes will be brought to the Board.

Facilities is recommending that the District move forward on bidding these three projects, Funds are available due to savings realized in the current project, The air handlers do not have to be done under the \$7.5 million project. Bids also came under budget. These two things have resulted in the funds to go forward with these three projects. Bids will be solicited as soon as possible. The Board will be asked to approve these bids in June.

Curriculum Committee

The Curriculum Committee met earlier this month. Discussion included a debriefing of the recent ELA tests in grades 3-8 and the importance of moving from the New York State Learning Standard to the Core Curriculum Standards. The discussion was led by Dr. Lynn Wells from the Capital Region BOCES. Next year the ELA tests will be built on the Core Curriculum Standards. The District will have to begin to educate staff to make that transition.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Ms. Streznewski asked the Board to consider pursuing teacher recognition. Rewarding what teachers do in the classroom that is directly related to the goals of the District. Ms. Streznewski proposed the Board implement a "Teacher of the Year Program". Guidelines should be developed by the Board based on certain criteria and recommendations of principles, rather than popularity. This does not have to be a costly project, perhaps a parking space for the month, etc. Start with Teacher of the Month and go to the Teacher of the Year. Perhaps this could be done school by school and include students in the discussion.

Mrs. Leet noted feedback on her suggestion relative to a brochure on gifted and talented students, focused on academics. Her intention was that all talents should be highlighted.

Ms. Green asked that the Board receive samples of benchmark assessments of ELA and discussion of how they are used. Reports from acuity assessment will be provided to Board members.

Dr. Brandon requested that the Board consider action related to the negative publicity that went out to the public against the school budget vote. Dr. Brandon noted concern relative to how the community would view the Board not responding to these actions.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Green made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Leet seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 10:20 p.m.