



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
September 16, 2010
7:00 p.m.
Montessori Magnet School

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

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

ABSENT: None

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.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Colucciello advised the first day of school went very well. Buildings were ready, transportation was prepared. The District continues to work with registration. Enrollment figures are changing daily. Dr. Colucciello advised the District did an excellent job in increasing enrollment in the public schools. The District has enrolled 296 additional students from 2009-2010 figures. Kindergarten and 1st grade classes have increased significantly. There are additional students who have failed to enter. Enrollment has increased between 4% and 5% this year. The efforts put forth by the District to register students throughout the summer have been very successful. The District is currently working on class size numbers. It appears the District will be bringing back five elementary teaching positions to fill needs identified by the increased enrollment. Approximately 300 students have returned from Charter Schools.

Mr. Hogan advised the State has settled the legislative state aid package for this year. The proposal is showing \$268,000 additional aid to the District than anticipated in the Governor's proposal. The District's budget for 2010-2011 is based on the Governor's proposal. This increase was driven from pre-k, special education, charter school transition aid, and building aid. This is good news in terms of the need to bring back teachers. The legislative aid also showed Federal Education Jobs Bill which has been awarded to New York State. However, guidelines for spending rules are not expected until late October. As of this date there are still two large federal grants the District is working toward. The District anticipates notification about the grant award for the Federal Magnet School Assistant Grant at the High School within the next two weeks. The other is the School Improvement Grant. The District has already been awarded \$300,000 from this grant, which is being used for the high school improvement. This grant has the potential and the Race to The Top funds are still pending. These federal funds are awarded to New York State and then New York State administers the funds. Dr. Colucciello also noted the charter school tuition increase remains an unresolved issue.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Ginnie Farrell addressed the Board relative to staffing in the Montessori classrooms. Ms. Farrell requested that the District provide aids for the Montessori classrooms.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Routine Consent items were presented for approval as follow: Proceedings of Meetings (August 19, 2010 and September 2, 2010); Appointments (Probationary, Reappointment, Regular Substitute, Miscellaneous); Transfers; Leave of Absence; Resignations; Creation of Position, Bid Awarded; Authorization to Enter into Contracts. Mr. Morris made a motion for approval. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve routine consent items.
Motion passed.

INFORMATION

Performance Targets

Dr. Colucciello noted the Board will be provided a comprehensive report from the principals on performance targets. Dr. Colucciello advised that everyone in the District has the same mission, to improve student achievement. The elementary and middle school principals will provide the strategies they have identified to achieve the goal of 25% increase in student achievement by the District. This goal is higher than the state target of 20%. District is setting a baseline for 2010. This baseline will change again for 2011. The District has been guided not to compare 3rd graders in one cohort with 4th graders in the next cohort. The tests are not the same and they are not being scored in the same way. Other things are changing including the time frame for the tests, materials on the test, the cut-scores, and SED expectations. This is shifting sand and although we all want to raise achievement we must be cognizant of the changes being put forth. The goal is clear.

Communication with parents, improved reading and writing skills across the curriculum, integrated technology in the classrooms, organize professional development meetings, continue to develop community partnerships, continue operation graduation programs, curriculum alignment, opportunities for teachers to see good practices, increased student assessments, increased classroom visits by administrators. Ms. Mackey suggested that the District start by focusing on with Level 1 students.

- Is Operation Graduation previously mentioned the same as the high school program? This is program at North Albany Academy that identifies struggling students and provides support services to insure that students are brought up to speed.
- Are meetings with principals scheduled on an individual basis? Meetings are scheduled with individual principals on an as needed basis. Monthly meetings are scheduled with all principals.
- Personalized Education Plans should be developed for all students. The expectation of teachers and students needs to be raised. College emphasis is important.
- The 25% benchmark is aggressive. However, there are too many Level I's. The goal should be to cut those Level I's in half and go to zero next year. There are a few goals that are too low. I think even 20% increase is a low goal.

- Student assessments should be taking place weekly. Parents need to be informed on a consistent basis, along with resources for assistance.
- How much interaction exchange does the District have in sharing best practices?
Principals will meet with the goal of shared responsibility for student success.

Pupil Educational Profile will house data on each student in one tool that can be used by new teachers, etc. The goal is to have this document in all schools on all students.

Public Comments included a suggestion that the District review the NCLB guidelines. The District should be individualizing targets for all students.

Mr. Egan closed the discussion advising that principals need to think about what they need in order to accomplish these goals. Additional needs should be presented to the Board for consideration.

Physical Education Program

Kathy Ryan, Director of Physical Education and Athletics gave a comprehensive presentation related to changes in the Physical Education Program began her presentation noting that Physical Education is a state mandate for grades K-12. This year the District is offering Physical Education to Pre-K students. This is a step in the right direction. Ms. Ryan identified programs at each grade level. Rookie Rugby has been initiated in grades 2- 6. Students love the game. This is an all-inclusive sport. The mission for high school students is that every student will pass PE and graduate from high school in 4 years. Grades K-12 will offer Fitnessgram, which is a physical fitness testing program, replacing the National Presidential Program. Ms. Ryan reviewed strategies related to partial electives, PE uniforms and the changes in the swimming program. Interscholastic Athletics and Varsity Sports were also defined. The presentation ended with a listing of accomplishments to date, including the development of the Athletic Code of Conduct, the Hall of Fame Program, Community Swim at the Myers pool, and a Lacrosse Club sport program will be offered to 7th & 8th graders in the spring of 2011. Ms. Ryan noted that the 2010 Valedictorian and Salutatorian were 3 sport athletes and ALL-STARS in soccer, basketball and cross country. 8 of the 10 highest GPA's in the Class of 2010 belonged to student athletes. The Hall of Fame Banquet is scheduled for Friday, October 8 at 6:00 p.m. and the Ramada Plaza.

Also included in the discussion was the possibility of a District policy that exempts student athletes from physical education classes when they are participating in varsity sports. This would allow those students extra time to receive academic support in order to keep up their grades, or increase their grade so that they are able to participate in sports. The District is providing tutors to student athletes. Board members discussed the possibility of offering swim opportunities for senior citizens during the daytime hours when the pools are not in use. Ms. Ryan noted that physical education and athletic are not the same. Presently, students are being encouraged to get moving physically. Physical education for Abrookin students is still being developed. The equipment previously at Harriett Gibbons has been moved to Abrookin. It will be used for physical education at Abrookin. The possibility of extending the Lacrosse program to additional grades was also mentioned. After two years 9th & 10th grade would be added and another two years 11th & 12th as a varsity. It takes four years to develop a program. It is important to teach the skill so that the students can compete. Athletic programs support academics. Students involved in sports activities do better academically.

Volunteer Program

Fiona Thompson, School Volunteer Coordinator, provided the Board a very comprehensive presentation regarding the District's Volunteer Program. The presentation included an overview; accomplishments to date, which included free school supplies for schools, the development of a webpage, security and background checking system, a District-wide volunteering calendar, volunteer recognition, graduation events, contact with PTA's, Summer volunteering, Diversity Council participation, Harriet Gibbons Inspiring Graduates, volunteer outreach, networking, University at Albany Undergraduate Education Program "390". Ms. Thompson continued with future efforts in building volunteer coordinators at each school, increasing parent participation in the Building Leadership Teams, changes in the documents for the volunteer program, and orientation packets for each school, increasing the number of retired volunteers and the development of the Volunteer Program Advisory Committee.

- Quantify for the Board the needs of the volunteer program in order to be successful.
- Do you keep volunteers in a data base?

We need to identify a volunteer who can do data entry.

Public comment included the difficulty in getting volunteers with the added burden of screening volunteers and the application form requesting confidential information. Ms. Thompson noted the application form has to be revised to address these issues. The Policy Committee discussed background checks and/or finger printing of volunteers. It was the decision of that group, and the Board to require background information. A suggestion was made to delete the personal information such as Social Security Number, following the background check. This will be discussed as part of the revision of the application form.

Shared Decision Making Plan

Dr. Colucciello noted the District's Shared Decision Making Plan (SDM) was reviewed by a group of approximately 25 people, made up of members of the Building Leadership Teams (BLT) that included staff, parents and one member of the Board. Building Leadership Teams are very dedicated to their job. The group met on several occasions. Basic changes include the requirement that parent members are required in order to establish a quorum at BLT meetings. There were some changes to the district-level team. This revitalized that team. Teams will meet at least once a month and training for team members. The group reached consensus on the changes. Upon approval the Plan will be forwarded to SED.

Mrs. Leet noted she was the one person who did not agree with the plan. Mrs. Leet presented a motion to change Section III 1.3 on membership stating that the parent organization should choose its representative. If there is no parent organization, the Volunteer Coordinator can solicit people. The reason is the idea of SDM is that each stakeholder group would choose their own representative. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion to allow discussion.

Discussion followed relative to the decision having been made by the review group. The review group was made up of representatives of each of the building leadership teams, made up of parents, teachers and staff. The parent organization in this document does not refer to the PTA. The committee was strong that there should be parent representation. It could be an organization that is not necessarily an organization that does not collect dues. The fact that the document states that a quorum cannot be established for BLT meetings without parent representation is essential. This issue was brought up to the review committee and it was turned down with a vote of 24 – 1. Mr. Egan called the vote.

The Board voted unanimously (1aye and 5 nays) to approve the motion.
Motion failed.

Mr. Morris made a motion to amend the agenda to adopt the Shared Decision Making Plan at this meeting. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. The District-wide committee will be called to meet to start the District review. Cover letter to SED advising the District is still working on it.

The Board voted 5 ayes and 1 nay. Mrs. Leet voted no.

Motion passed.

BOARD COMMITTEES

Policy Committee met earlier this week. Policies will be brought forward to the Board for review.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Mrs. Brandon presented a second time the possibility of recognizing students who have scored 3's and 4's on the ELA's. All Board members were in agreement.

Mr. Morris asked that Home School Coordinators be recognized for their efforts last year. They were recognized by the Albany Police Department. All Board members were in agreement.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Mackey made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Gaffuri seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 11:05 p.m.