



CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF ALBANY

November 17, 2011

7:00 p.m.

Stephen and Harriet Middle School

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

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.

Mr. Egan made a motion to amend the agenda to include two resolutions under Routine Consent; Appointment of Construction Manager and Appoint of Hearing Officer. Dr. Brandon seconded the motion.

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

Ms. Cutting listed the vote count result from the November 8, 2011 election of new Board members as follows: Ginnie Farrell – 6,696, Melissa Mackey – 5,047, and Sue Adler – 5,919. These are unofficial numbers. Absentee ballots will be counted next week. Final results will be available at that time. The Albany County Board of Election will certify the votes at that time.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Thomas DeGiulio, Principal at Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology, introduced Mya Rodgers, a third grade student at TOAST, who helped raise funds for the flood victims in Schoharie County. "Shades for Schoharie", took place on October 6th. Students and staff donated a dollar or canned good in exchange for being able to wear their sunglasses to school and in school. They raised \$270.39 and collected 170 cans, all of which was donated to the American Red Cross relief efforts for Schoharie County. For her efforts, Mya was nominated for the "Kid of the Week" by radio station B95.5 and appeared on Capital Region YNN television. She was also featured in the *Times Union* on October 23, 2011.

Dr. Colucciello noted District teachers also volunteered to provide insulation materials to those affected by the floods. There are also several other projects underway to assist this devastated area.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Cathy Corbo, President of APSTA, noted concern that it now mid-November and there has not been any action towards recruiting a new superintendent for the District. The District needs to be proactive in this search given the pool of candidates and the number of school district looking for new leadership.
2. Marlon Anderson congratulated the newly elected Board members. Mr. Anderson noted the community needs to come together to address education in the City. The Albany City School District should reach out to Charter Schools to address the divisiveness in the City that was evident throughout the election this year.
3. Bert Malerba echoed the previous comments, noting that the divisiveness between the public school and charter schools needs to be addressed for the good of all students in the City.

FACILITIES PROJECT

Change Orders

Mr. Hogan presented change orders for Arbor Hill Elementary School and Albany High School for approval. Ms. Streznewski made a motion to approve the change orders, Ms. Green seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Mr. Egan presented the following Routine Consent Items for approval. Appointments (Probationary, Miscellaneous, Substitutes), Transfers, Leaves of Absence; Resignation/Retirement and corrections; Bid Awards (Johnstone Supply #340, Upstate Transit of Saratoga); Approval of Vehicle Donation; 2012 Membership Dues NYSSBA; Resolution to Approve Superintendent Search and resolution to Approve Charter School Public Hearing. Ms. Streznewski made a motion to approve routine consent items. Ms. Green seconded the motion. Ms. Streznewski asked that the Resolution to Approve Superintendent Search by set aside.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the motion absent the item set aside.

Motion passed absent the item set aside.

Ms. Streznewski Made a motion to approve Resolution to Approve Search Consultant. Mrs. Leet seconded the motion. Ms. Streznewski noted as a result of the comment made during Public Comment, the District is moving forward with the Superintendent Search. The search will be conducted by BOCES at no cost to the taxpayers.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the motion absent the item set aside.

Motion passed absent the item set aside.

INFORMATION

90-90-90

Dr. Tresa Diggs noted on October 20, 2011, a team of teachers and administrators attended a conference in Jersey City. Lisa House, Kandie Antoinetti and Jim Finnegan gave a comprehensive presentation on 90-90-90 Schools. These schools are identified as having more than 90% of the students eligible for free and reduced lunch, a commonly used surrogate for low-income families; more than 90% of the students are from ethnic minorities; and 90% of the student met or achieved high academic standards according to independently conducted tests of academic achievement. Additionally, the fourth “90” are English Language Learners. The group described the characteristics of high achievement schools and holistic accountability found in high performing schools.

The presentation continued with Common Formative Assessments; Non-Fiction Writing, Next Steps/Action Plan; Focus on Academic Achievement; Curriculum Choices; Frequent Assessment of Student Progress with Multiple Opportunities for Improvement; Emphasis on Non-Fiction Writing, and Collaborative Scoring of Student Work.

Take-Aways for the Albany City School District include Identifying Power Standards; Creation of Common Formative Assessments – short and frequent; pre and post testing; Collaborative Scoring with Data Comparison and Analysis to identify Best Instructional Practices; Data Teams and K-12 Alignment of Curricula.

Dr. Diggs advised the District has plans for going further with this study. Discussions are currently under way with the Leadership and Learning Center, who sponsored this conference. They have agreed to provide the District with professional development focused on rigorous teaching across the content area, unwrapping to the common core standards and prioritizing the common cores.

- Was there a difference between high school and elementary school achievement?
This is a K-12 initiative involving aligning the curriculum. This is more of a protocol using best practices in the data cycle. Instruction allows time to circle back to those areas that need additional instruction.
- What are the things that the District needs to change?
At the high school there are a lot of initiatives. The recommendation is for every initiative that is initiated, another initiative is eliminated.
- How will this work with RtI?
There is no true model for turn around. 90-90-90 incorporates characteristics that promote data driven environment. RtI plan would help drives student needs.
- A lot of initiatives the District has under way dovetail with the 90-90-90 protocol. What would be additional that the District needs to do?
There needs to be a philosophy from the custodian to the Superintendent that poor, minority students can achieve.
- How do we change that mindset?
There needs to be reinforcement with students themselves. Displaying data all over the building so that students are reminded of achievement throughout the day and they begin to believe that they can be successful.

- What is the impact of this program?

The 90-90-90 is more than a building initiative. This starts with the Board, community, teachers and students. It engages conversations about learning, delivery of instructions, strategies about how different students learn. Also, the District needs to celebrate its successes. There is a plan for infuse these characteristics into our buildings.

Attendance

Dr. Colucciello introduced Deputy Commissioner, Department of Youth and Workforce Services, Truancy Abatement Program, Mr. Sal Villa gave a comprehensive report on the Truancy Abatement Program in the City of Albany. The goal of the Truancy Abatement Program is to improve school attendance, reduce juvenile crime and increase parental responsibilities. The program operates September – June in partnership with City, local schools, Albany County Probation, The Albany Police Department and community agencies. Coordinated morning and evening home visits find and resolve obstacles, while also providing appropriate support services and aftercare for students who are consistently absent from school. This program has been a tremendous success. There has been significant improvement in attendance in the elementary and middle schools. Efforts at the high school continue to reduce student absences.

Members of the program asked the District to consider a uniform reporting system for all schools so that reporting is consistent throughout the District. The issue is that attendance is reported differently by the schools. The District will look into working on this issue to be consistent.

- Would changing the starting time for secondary education have any impact on student tardiness?

There are issues in the home that cause students to be late or absent.

- Are students in Alt Ed being tracked for attendance?

Students in Alt Ed with attendance issues are followed.

Mr. Colucciello noted attendance in the District has increased significantly in the last three years.

Shared Decision Making (SDM)

Dr. Colucciello noted Jodi Commerford, who is Interim Principal at Pine Hills Elementary. Ms. Commerford was asked to work with each building to do an assessment of the SDM process in the District. Ms. Commerford reviewed the process of the SDM Process – to improve schools in a framework of trust and collaboration among stakeholders. The goal is to improve student achievement and to strengthen community support for schools. The presentation included District Goals, Membership on Building Leadership Teams, Results of a BLT Member Survey, and the Member Recruitment Process. Ms. Commerford noted all schools utilize the District's SDM Plan in creating School Improvement Plans; Create/support sub-committees to assist in completing its School Improvement Plan; Work to improve student achievement and Make Use of the Comprehensive Education Plan; and Significant Achievements of the BLT.

Findings include the following: All schools are successful in following the District's Plan for implementing shared decision making. An annual District-wide BLT Committee formation may be established to review the SDM process; School Improvement Plans/Comprehensive Education Plans will be submitted to be available upon request at each school and the District Plan will be made available on the District website.

Dr. Colucciello also noted that the District has a Shared Decision Making Hiring Guidelines that will also be presented to the Board for review. This process insures that appropriate stakeholders participant in the staff selection process.

- Actively recruit community members, a representative from a corporate sponsor to participate in the BLT teams. Specific seek sponsors that could offer financial assistance to schools.

- The parent membership is one of the weak links on the BLTs.

Membership should focus on clergy, sororities and fraternities could also be recruited, along with corporate sponsors. College chapters have students who live in the community. Also, the NAACP might be able to find younger students who might be interested in getting involved.

- In consideration of corporate sponsors, the District needs to be aware of equity throughout the District.
- The SDM is a process that focuses on the authentic involvement of its members. The District needs to strengthen the issues of the different groups making the selection of the membership.

Ms. Commerford noted that the BLTs are doing so much work and the terminology becomes difficult for parents. It is important that parents understand the charge of the BLTs. This becomes part of the education of members.

Policies

Ms. Jackson-Chalmers suggested because the Board received the wrong policy \$5450. Sex Offender Notification, the correct policy will be resubmitted with the next agenda for review. The second policy #4531 Field Trips and Excursions was presented for review. Ms. Jackson Chalmers noted the Policy Committee reviewed the policy. Revisions to the policy include a statement when field trips are planned, every effort should be made to include all eligible students. Also a number of bullets have been added under criteria for approval of field trips and excursions. Included in these bullets is, “no child will be excluded from the possibility of participation, based on their inability to pay provided they avail themselves of all fundraising opportunities”. The policy also includes a new section on funding for field trips and excursions. There were some language changes under the regulations. Procedures have been edited to include all steps that necessary for the approval process.

Ms. Green requested that an additional bullet be included under criteria for approval. Field trips exceeding \$500 per student will require the field trip coordinator to organize fund raising activities to insure that all students interested in attending the trip will be able to participate. Add as a bullet. Ms. Mackey asked that the language under funding for field trips should read “To that end, the Board requires groups...”

Following additional discussion the decision was made to separate regular field trips and those trips that are out-of-the country. Mr. Egan suggested that this policy be brought back to the Policy Committee. Comments presented this evening will be taken into consideration.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Hogan noted the Facilities Committee met last evening at Albany High School so that members could survey work scheduled for renovation next summer. The members reviewed the construction manager proposals for work that is going to take place at Abrookin next summer. This evening the Board approved a resolution to approve Turner Construction as Construction Manager.

Dr. Diggs advised the Alt Ed Committee met this week. Subgroup Chairs talked about their individual areas. PEP Plans were discussed extensively and how the new data system may dovetail with some of the PEP Plans. The Code of Conduct Subcommittee talked about restructuring the Code of Conduct, providing more options for behavioral infractions. The group talked about next steps. MAPs program data has been reviewed and the TOPS program will be next. The committee does not expect to be prepared to report to the Board until the first meeting in February.

The Grade Configuration Committee has met and two subcommittees have been formed. One will look at different kinds of configurations and how the curriculum would be impacted by different configurations. The second committee will look at building themselves to determine if the buildings have capacity to handle those configurations.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Ms. Green requested that the District consider the possibility of providing subsidized bus passes for students on free and reduced lunch. These students just under the one mile distance have to walk in all kinds of weather. This also contributes to student absences.

The Homework Club at Sheridan Preparatory Academy needs additional staff. Ms. Green asked that the Board consider this during budget discussions.

Mrs. Leet discussed the agenda for the Board workshop. Following discussion, the suggestion was made to forward comments and/or changes relative to the agenda to the Superintendent's Office.

Dr. Brandon asked that the District provide guidance related to holiday decorations in the classrooms. Guidelines should be consistent throughout the District.

Adjournment

Ms. Streznewski made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Green seconded the motion. The Board adjourned at 10:30 a.m.