



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
September 15, 2011
7:00 p.m.
Montessori Magnet School

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

ABSENT\EXCUSED:
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 tenure appointments. Mrs. Leet seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to amend the agenda.
Motion passed.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Ken Lein, Principal of Montessori Magnet School, introduced Gavin Piskutz, who was honored September 4, 2011, as the *Times Union* "Kid of the Week." During a summer camp program, Gavin organized his friends to dig up and sell worms to fishermen in the Saratoga area to raise money for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. They also set up a bake sale and refreshment stand at a dance. They raised more than \$150 to benefit St. Jude's.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Noelene Smith addressed the Board regarding achievement and goal setting. In working with the District in applying for grant funding, one statistic stood out, only 60% of the students living in Arbor Hill, West End, and the South End graduate from high school. Ms. Smith urged the Board to keep that in mind as they proceed to develop goals.
2. Marlon Anderson addressed the Board regarding education in the different communities in the District. The achievement gap needs to be bridged. The only way to turn around public opinion is the address this gap.

FACILITIES PROJECT

Action

Change Orders

Mr. Egan presented two change orders for approval. Ms. Streznewski made a motion for approval. Ms. Mackey seconded the motion. Mr. Hogan advised the first change order is for Albany High School for valve replacement. The second change order is for Arbor Hill Elementary School for various items. Mrs. Leet noted that as she toured the renovations at Albany High School, she was surprised that the inside of lockers had not been painted and that some of the ladies rooms were not completed. Mrs. Leet asked if this work was delayed due to the hurricane. Mr. Hogan advised that painting the inside of the lockers was not part of the renovation, based on cost. Those restrooms that were not renovated will be completed next year.

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

Motion passed.

INFORMATION

District Data Overview

Mr. Cioffi gave a comprehensive presentation on District data, including School and District Designations, Definitions, Accountability Measures, Schools in Good Standing. Improvement Year 1, a breakdown of elementary schools improvement year 1 by sub-groups, Corrective Action Schools, Regents Results, Graduation Rates, ELA and Math Proficient Comparison, and the steps the District will be taking in the future.

Mr. Cioffi spoke about the three designations of schools: Good Standing, when the school has met all its Annual Yearly Performance (AYP) indexes. When a school moves out of good standing, it moves into one of three categories, improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The school can be in various stages of improvement; basic (identified for the performance of a single student group on a single measure); focused (identified for performance of the "All Student" group, can be identified for multiple subgroups); comprehensive (identified for the performance of an "All Student" group or the failure of all groups except the "All Student" group). Accountability measures for elementary and middle schools are English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and 4th and 8th grade Science. Measures for high school are ELA, Mathematics, and Graduation Rate.

New Scotland Elementary School and Pine Hills Elementary School each made their AYP for all measures and all sub groups. Montessori will need to work on the Economically Disadvantaged subgroup for math. Sheridan Preparatory Academy (SPA) will need to concentrate improvement in both ELA and math for all students. SPA cannot miss AYP in any subgroup in either measure or it will be identified as a School In Need of Improvement (SINI) next year. Eagle Point and Arbor Hill fall into a similar situation as SPA. They will be identified if they miss their AYP in ELA or math. Mr. Cioffi noted that in some instances a particular subgroup did not meet its AYP due to one student's score. Also, scores for certain subgroups in a school can be influenced by economics and high needs. Math scores across the state are lower, based on a change in scoring levels. Schools that moved into the Improvement Year 1 category are Schuyler Achievement Academy, Delaware Community School, Albany School of Humanities, and Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology. Schools in Corrective Action are North Albany Academy and Giffen Memorial. Giffen was able to make its AYP for ELA in the Black Students and Students with Disabilities subgroups. Improvement has been made.

Mr. Cioffi noted that many of the subgroups are missing their target by small numbers of students. There is evidence of improvement throughout the District. There are some schools that might only have 15 students who are English Language Learners (ELL). If there are less than 30 students in a subgroup, they are not counted. Students are doing better, but perhaps not fast enough. Mr. Cioffi also pointed out that graduation rates include students through August. Since 2009, the District is now making the threshold for testing. Graduation rates are always one school year behind. District students include those students who are in placement, e.g., BOCES. Graduation rates reported by SED in May are only through June of the previous year. The District's graduation rate is 3-5% higher when August graduations are included. Trends indicate more students are passing than four years ago. A comparison of other large school districts and Albany indicates that Albany's scores are similar to other larger school districts.

- What is EAMO? How is that number established?

EAMO is Effective Annual Measurable Objective. The State provides that number through a very complicated formula that has not been shared with the public.

- The Albany School District fails in every school for every category except Giffen, New Scotland, and Pine Hills. As a District, we need to focus on the Black and Economically Disadvantaged subgroups. If we don't target those groups, we will never meet our targets. How is the District going to be successful unless a plan is created to make sure that Black and Economically Disadvantaged students receive the assistance they need? Giffen was previously cited, and it is now meeting the target. Best practices used at Giffen need to be considered going forward.
- Targets established for the District are basic. The District should be aspiring to benchmarks similar to suburban schools. Why don't we look to restructure elementary schools right now? There are only two successful elementary schools feeding the middle schools and high school. You cannot sustain a District in that way. We have to figure out what direction the District is going in. Our students deserve better.

Some of what the District is doing now is working. But restructuring schools at this point does not mean the State starts to evaluate from zero.

- These statistics are unacceptable. We are looking for a way to make a real difference to a lot of kids, done honestly and through our hearts.
- We have an extremely bleak situation. We need to look at what Mrs. Ford has done at Giffen. I would like to see some immediate action on this, with emphasis on Level 1 and 2 students.
- I would like to see each subgroup broken out and where did the schools land?

That information will be forwarded to Board members.

- Is there a correlation between the new math and the lower scores?

No. These scores are lower because the tests were re-leveled. This year, almost every district had a subgroup that scored lower for math.

- What is the definition of urban/suburban?

Urban/suburban schools are considered similar by the state. They are in the same category.

- The EAMO is the target set for each individual school. Is there an actual state objective? Do we have that figure?

Yes. That is the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO). That information will also be provided.

- It's really unfortunate that we depend on these over-simplified, standardized tests to measure what we do. Most researchers would agree with that. It is not what the top-performing national schools are doing. We are being forced by the state and the federal government. Having said that, achievement is why we are here. We are the Board and we set the priorities. We need to set the vision for the District.

- When we look at drop-outs, they have been at Level 1 for some time. That is an indication that they will not graduate. Focus on the Level 1's and 2's early and focus a lot. We have everything in place except a clear focus. Students need to be taught how to read and how to address complex concepts. How do we teach them to add, divide, subtract, and multiply, and how do we get them out the door, where they need to be productive members of society? If it means restructuring, and changing grade configurations, we have to do something.

Public Comment

Mr. Malerba stated his concern for the process of the presentation. No more glossing over. There should be no knee-jerk. The year ahead, keep it simple, connect more with black students, and people in poverty.

Ms. Smith stated black students should be compared to suburban students. Let's do more in the lower grades. Education does start early.

Ms. McElroy-Moore noted there are valuable discussions at the teaching level. Teachers should be brought into the discussion. There are creative things that need to be heard.

Mr. Andrews mentioned a breakfast program for every school, where possible, knowing students personally, interacting with students, and positive incentives for students.

Summer School

Dr. McCalla introduced Lawrence Moltre, Summer School Coordinator, who gave an overview of the 2011 summer school program. Mr. Moltre outlined Program Objectives, Enrollment, Course Offerings, Class Results, Regents Results, and Recommendations for preparation of the program for next year.

- Eligibility criteria should be changed to mandate attendance in summer school if the student has failed the Regents. Suggestion to purchase Baron Review books for regular classes and summer school. Consider transportation for students. Why is there lower enrollment? A 50% pass rate is not acceptable. This many students in summer school is not acceptable. What is going on during the year that so many students are failing? The District needs to look at those classes that have more than 50 students going to summer school.
- What is the cost of the summer school program?

The cost is approximately \$250,000.

- Geometry is the only Regents that had more than half of the students passing. What are we doing? We have a summer school program. We have enrolled 474 students in summer school. Only 59 students are taking new courses. Having 415 students out of a student body of 2,200 needing to go to summer school is abysmal. Something has to be different about the academic year and summer school. Results for summer school are not all that different from the regular school year.
- The passing rate for those students who did not attend summer school, and took the Regents in Earth Science and U.S. History was greater than the passing rate for the students who took the summer school class. What recommendation do you have regarding changes in the curriculum to address the fact that students are not passing, after taking courses a second time/

- What recommendations from last year were you able to achieve this year?
Purchased new review books. Books were purchased and used in class. Also, the non-resident student c was increased.
- Half or more of students who passed the course, failed the Regents. How is that possible?
The recommendation is that preparation of the program should begin earlier in the year in order to align the curriculum. The District needs to be consistent in selecting teachers. Early preparation is a necessity. Many schools are not doing summer school based on results. The District needs to look at the cost and preparation of the program versus the results.
- How many of the failures were due to lack of attendance.
That information will be provided to Board members.
- Do teachers recommend summer school to students who are failing in the high school similar to students in middle school?
Students who fail courses can opt to go. Their counselors notify students of their failures and make recommendations for summer school.
- Are students taking more than one course? Are students taking three courses?
There were students who did take three courses.
- Members of the Board are saying that the District needs to fundamentally rethink what is being done here. In order to get different results, we need to do things differently. I would like to see earlier planning, but also a real rethink of the concept and possibly expansion. Should all of those students who are in jeopardy of not graduating be required to attend?

Special Education Summer School

Ms. Rudnick introduced Dawn Ray and Erin Tuffey, Site-based Coordinators for the special education summer program, named Academic Intervention and Maintenance Summer Academy. Ms. Ray and Ms. Tuffey presented an overview of the program, which is a six-week program, held in two sites, 5 days per week, from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. with breakfast and lunch provided to all students. The purpose of the program is to prevent substantial regression in a student's ability to maintain developmental levels due to loss of skills or knowledge during the months of July and August. The program is targeted to those special education students who require a twelve-month special service program. These students have severe, multiple disabilities. Their needs are determined to be highly intensive and require a high degree of individualized attention and intervention. Students are recommended for this program through the Special Education Committees. The program is an extended-school-year program.

The number of students served was 188 who attended full days and 9 students who attended 3 days a week from 8:30-11:30 a.m. The average attendance rate was 78%. The total cost of the program, salaries, and supplies was \$520,000. The nature and scope of the program was also reviewed. Measures and protocols included Fountas & Pinnell pre-tests and post-tests, which indicated 82% of students maintained or improved reading skills, and 40% were eligible for New York State Alternative Assessment (NYSAA). This program is focused on students with multiple disabilities who are unable to hold a pencil for testing.

- Why is the goal only regression prevention, why not to move the students forward?
Program is developed to prevent regression. Hopefully they will move forward.

- Why were there some students in classes who only maintained skills and did not improve? Some students have I.E.P. goals that have expectations of maintaining. These are severely disabled students. The purpose is to maintain so that students don't take six to eight weeks to recover what they have lost through the summer months. These students historically regress during school recesses. In order for a student to be recommended to the program, the District needs to show evidence that the student continues to regress through school vacations. The program is required. The District is reimbursed 80%. The expectation is that they will not regress. The hope is that they will improve.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Routine Consent Items were presented as follows: Appointments (Administrative Appointments, Probationary Appointments, Reappointments, Regular Substitutes, and Miscellaneous); Transfers, Leaves of Absence, Resignations, and Corrections; Disposal of Assets; Appointments to Special Education Committees; Authorization to Enter into Contracts; Attendance at Conferences; and Resolution to Reschedule Contract for Excellence Public Hearing. Ms. Streznewski made a motion for approval. Ms. Green seconded the motion.

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

Motion passed

DISCUSSION

Approval of New Course Offerings for 2012-13

Dr. Diggs noted these are some of the new course offerings that will be coming before the Board for review and approval: Dr. McCalla and Mr. Cartwright presented the following course offerings:

Electives: The Fashion Industry; Global and Gourmet Foods

Core Subjects: AP Language and Composition; Forensic Science

Dr. McCalla advised that as part of restructuring and regeneration of the curriculum we would like the curriculum to be in place earlier in the year to have informed decision making and adequate preparation. Also, the number of students who sign up for the course will determine whether or not the classes will be offered. A subcommittee has been working to develop new courses to be offered to students in the four academies. Full descriptions of the courses have been forwarded to Board members.

- We are looking for courses that appeal to all students in all academies. Why would a student take a college-level class (AP Language and Composition) in 11th grade if World Literature be an honors class in 12th grade? What specific courses have been developed around the Youth Court and the UN Room? Have students been surveyed to determine their expectations? Courses related to current history would be relevant to students. There are a lot of ways that dynamic classes could be presented to students. There should also be classes that are appropriate for students across the academic spectrum. If not, we are maintaining the two-tiered system.

Due to time constraints, there has not been the level of student involvement. Some of the responses to summer camp programs and the climate survey could be helpful in determining what students would be looking for. The District is also looking at specific courses for the specialty rooms.

- Why were the Fashion Industry and Global and Gourmet Foods courses assigned to individual academies?

Based on interest, courses will be offered to students in all academies. These courses require an interdisciplinary approach.

Goals

Mr. Egan gave a brief review of the steps the Board has taken in getting to the place where definitive goals can be established and prioritized. Board members have identified the Personalized Education Plan (PEP) as a high priority and also raising achievement with measurable goals.

Mr. Egan suggested the Board might come to consensus that the top priority goal for this year would be on an overall goal of establishing an outcome measure of achievement and the second goal would be establishing the PEP. One way to craft the first goal would be to combine some of the goals identified by the members as a high priority, getting those schools off the lists, which captures the high priorities of the Board.

Following a lengthy discussion, Board members agreed that for 2011-12, in the ongoing effort to get all of our schools off state low-performance lists, the Board will target District resources to getting the Black Students subgroup in all schools to meet the Annual Yearly Progress goals. Setting goals for promotion and establishing Personalized Education Plans would be targeted steps toward the above goal.

The Board agreed that the administration would review the comments made this evening and then develop the goal for the District by adding suggestions and tasks outlined as part of the process in achieving that goal. The Board will continue discussion of this item at the next meeting.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Policy Committee met earlier this week and reviewed a number of policies in the 6000 Series. Most of these policies are fiscal policies that will be presented at the next meeting for review.

Alt Ed met on Monday at Myers. The group recommitted to the subcommittees. The group will also insure that all new members receive documents. The group is still looking for a facilitator.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Mrs. Leet asked for an update on the Grade Configuration Committee. This will be on the next agenda.

Ms. Mackey suggested a practice of having a student report from each school for the roundtable meetings, a brief presentation of what is going on at their school.

Ms. Green requested the Board look at transportation for the middle schools and high school for those who live a distance of 1.3 miles. Part of that conversation should include our lobbyists seeking additional aid for transportation.

Mr. Egan encouraged Board members to review the Board materials prior to the meetings. Asking questions before the Board meeting is a means of acquiring better information and enabling Board meetings to end on time.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Mackey made a motion to adjourn. Dr. Brandon seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.