

**ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Business Meeting**  
**May 26, 2016**

**Attendance:** President White, Vice President Elliott and Commissioners Adams, Cruz, Hallmark, Evans, and Powell; Interim Superintendent Linda Cimusz; East High School EPO Superintendent Shaun Nelms; Board Clerk Shanai Lee.

President White convened the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

- I. The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by a young audience member selected by President White.
- II. **Acceptance of Minutes:** Motion to accept the minutes of the April 28<sup>th</sup> Business Meeting, May 9<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting, May 10<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting, May 11<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting, May 12<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting, May 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Meeting, and May 24<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting was made by Commissioner Hallmark and seconded by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 6-0 with Vice President Elliott absent.

Vice President Elliott arrived at 6:15 p.m.

- III. **Recognition:** The Rochester Board of Education recognized twenty students from Nathaniel Rochester Community School No. 3 who participated in the 2016 Xerox Science Challenge Day on May 12, 2016 with the ‘I Believe.’ Four teams of students from the school were honored at this event for their innovative inventions and presentations, out of a total of 170 students from 17 schools throughout the county.

The following students from NRCS received the “I Believe” award:

- Nasyah Medina and Michael Stroughter for First Place Honors for their invention of the *All in One Farm Stick*
- Ebony Council and Jahira Drumgoole for Second Place Honors for creating the *Flower Power Solar Charger*
- Na’Jamir Wright and Cedric Hall for receiving the Student Choice Award for developing the *Candy Shooter*
- Nang Hau and Craig Hunter for their presentation skills in discussing their invention, *Rocky’s Room*

- IV. **Speakers Addressing an Agenda Item:** Parent Barbara VanKerkhove spoke about the proposed revisions to the Code of Conduct and urged the Board to authorize the revised policy.
- V. **Speakers Not Addressing an Agenda Item:** Students Beatrix Almer-Martin, Declen Keane, Douglas Bell Freitag, Mia Hodge, Sadi Schoonover, and Nate Schoonover spoke about the need to provide School No. 12 with adequate staffing and resources to meet programming requirements and needs of students and families. Parents Victoria Robertson and Eleonar Payton spoke about the need to provide School No. 12 with adequate staffing and resources to meet programming requirements and needs of students and families. Community member Pastor Jose Rodriguez spoke about the moral obligations of the school district. Staff members Angela Kraus and Henry Padron spoke about the need to provide

School No. 12 with adequate staffing and resources to meet programming requirements and needs of students and families.

**VI. Superintendent's Report:** Prior to introducing Dr. Nelms, President White noted that the East High School Eagles Boys Baseball were scheduled to compete in Section V finals versus Webster Schroeder High School. Dr. Nelms mentioned and recognized a private donor who purchased 1,000 tickets for students and families of East High School to attend the Section V finals game.

Dr. Nelms delivered a presentation to update the Board on graduation rate projections, academic data for the third marking period, attendance, behavior and proposed budgetary changes. Dr. Nelms noted that the 2015 graduation rate for East High School was 33.3%. In presenting the data for graduation rate projections, Dr. Nelms noted that 22.76% of enrolled students are on track to graduate and have passed 5 or more Regents exams and have 16 or more credits required for graduation. He stated that the projections are based on current analysis and are likely to increase with continued efforts of the school's administrative team. Dr. Nelms also noted that attendance continues to be a challenge for the school, but has increased across all grade levels. He attributes this increase in attendance to the school's programming. Like attendance, the school has made strides in reducing the number of student disciplinary issues across all grade levels; i.e. the number of suspensions has decreased from 2,496 during the 2014/15 school year to 761 during the 2015/16 school year.

President White asked about various initiatives that the school is employing to increase attendance. Dr. Nelms stated that he and members of his team conduct several home visits daily. Additionally, several resources have been dedicated to address the needs of overage and under-credited students. Vice President Elliott asked about graduation rates, specifically asking whether or not the 2016 graduation rate would exceed the 2015 graduation rate. Dr. Nelms urged the Board to consider the fact that the EPO has only been in place for one year, and he went on to state that many of the students enrolled in the school had not been enrolled in the classes necessary to graduate. He added that he and his team are working to identify those students who are in need of additional supports to perform at grade level and ultimately graduate with their cohort. Vice President Elliott stressed the point that several resources have been dedicated to the school and she looks forward to increased academic performance of students. Commissioner Hallmark, Commissioner Adams, and Commissioner Cruz acknowledged that additional time is needed to improve student performance and encouraged Dr. Nelms and his team to continue to implement the improvement efforts that are underway.

Interim Superintendent Cimusz delivered a presentation that highlighted recent programming and initiatives. She spoke about the Bright Futures Job and Career Fair and explained that the job and career fair is aimed at graduating seniors and is sponsored by the FLREDC Educational/Workforce Development group. Through the fair, 460 graduating seniors were connected with 54 area employers and offered career opportunities. Ms. Cimusz also spoke about the upcoming graduation schedule. In noting that the end of school is nearing quickly, she spoke about the monthly attendance blitzes and the resulting reductions in chronic truancy rates. She recognized the efforts of Jerome Underwood and his team in addressing absenteeism throughout the District. In her presentation Ms. Cimusz also noted that the District will continue to reduce summer learning loss with aggressive learning and enrichment programming that will serve more than 10,000 students. She also mentioned a collaboration with area school districts that have expressed an interest and willingness to explore enrolling students in the District's schools with CTE programming at the Edison High School Campus and East for the 2016/17 school year. Ms. Cimusz concluded her report by presenting President White and Commissioner Hallmark with certificates from the New York State School Board Association in recognition of completed professional development modules offered by the association.

Commissioner Adams asked whether or not summer school registration is closed, Ms. Cimusz responded that the registration deadline has passed but the District is still allowing for registration in bilingual programming efforts.

Vice President Elliott asked about attendance and its relation to student suspensions, specifically she asked how attendance impacts attendance. Ms. Cimusz indicated that she will provide follow-up information in response to this question. Vice President Elliott referred to the monthly suspension data, and asked for additional information such as trend data and information on the efforts that are being done to address suspensions. She also went on to ask for data on the effectiveness of summer school programming. Ms. Cimusz noted that related information on summer school programming was presented to the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee. Commissioner Powell pointed out an image in the presentation that showed empty library shelves, and noted that the image may not convey the intended message of engage student learning. Commissioner Evans offered final comments on the Superintendent's report by noting the success of the Urban-Suburban program and District staff members in bringing suburban districts to tour the District's facilities and the anticipated success of the annual Family Affair in the Park program.

Prior to beginning the committee reports, President White noted that the Board's student representative was not present. Commissioner Cruz suggested that two students be appointed to the position for the coming school year.

## **VII. Board Reports:**

### **Audit Committee**

**Chair Mary Adams:** The Audit Committee met on today, May 26<sup>th</sup> with Freed Maxick, the Board's External Auditor, to review the Audit Plan for the financial audit for the year ending June 30, 2016. The Committee discussed the plan and reviewed the timelines for receiving the audit results. She noted that preliminary fieldwork has already occurred and the final audit work will take place in September 2016. Commissioner Adams made a motion to accept the Audit Plan, seconded by Vice President Elliott. Motion carries 7-0.

Commissioner Adams noted that the new Uniform Guidance for Federal awards will impact the 2016 audit. She stated that the Auditor General is reviewing the District's current policies and protocols to determine if required changes in the areas of Conflict of interest, Procurement and Time Reporting are addressed. If policy changes are required, the Board will likely need to fast track changes for year end.

The Committee is planning to meet with Freed Maxick on Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup> at 5:45 p.m. to review the final results of the 2016 Rochester City School District Audit. All Board members are invited to attend.

### **Finance Committee**

**Chair Jose Cruz:** The Finance Committee met on Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup> to consider Resolution Nos. 2015-16: 746 through 762, and two late-submission resolutions related to the FMP. The Finance Committee recommends approval of the April 2016 Financial Report by the Board. Commissioner Cruz made a motion to accept the report, seconded by Commissioner Powell. Motion carries 7-0. The following resolutions were reviewed by the Finance Committee, and are advanced to the Board with recommendation: Resolution 746 for Procurement & Supply; Resolutions 747 through 761 for Facilities; and Resolution 762 for Information Management & Technology. The next Finance Committee Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 p.m.

## **Excellence in Student Achievement Committee**

**Chair Malik Evans:** The Excellence in Student Achievement Committee met on Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, to discuss a number of important initiatives including:

- The feasibility study and recommendations of the Special Military Academy Advisory Committee about establishing a military academy in the District
- Adoption of new textbooks for 60 bilingual classrooms (Resolution No. 2015-16: 773)
- Proposed partnership between School No. 33 and East High School to create a “purpose-built community”

The members of the Special Military Academy Advisory Committee discussed the factors considered in the feasibility study and efforts to obtain public input. The Committee members examined different models for public military schools across the country, compared graduation rates of military schools to that of their constituent districts, conducted an online survey to gauge the level of public support for a military academy in Rochester, and met with a number of focus groups to discuss this idea. In an effort to obtain greater input from District families, the Spanish version of the survey was re-opened and ministers and clergy members in the African American community were contacted.

The Advisory Committee recommended establishing a military academy in the Rochester City School District that would be open to admitting students from local suburban districts, but the majority of students would be from within the District. A standalone program school was recommended to facilitate approval by the NYS Education Department and enable students to have connections with a home school and participate in District athletic programs. The vision is for the school to begin with a small cohort of 75 students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and grow gradually over time by adding another 75 students in the next grade level each year. Advisory Committee members recommended using a college preparatory curriculum with rigorous coursework in STEM subjects and the opportunity to pursue a 4+1 diploma pathway. Student discipline would be based on a tiered model of crisis intervention, from prevention to de-escalation to restorative practices. The focus would be on academic rigor and preparation to serve as community leaders, rather than to enter into military service.

Concerns expressed by members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee included:

- Rationale for recommending a military academy v. expanding JROTC programs in the District
- Funding for a school that would be open to students in suburban districts
- Underrepresentation of African American and Latino families in the surveys of public support
- Uncertainties about designing an admissions process that would ensure that a majority of students are from RCSD
- History of racism in military service and tendency for African American families to resist the idea of a military academy as one of the few options for attaining quality of life in this country
- Extent to which focus on military culture contradicts the principle of appreciating cultural diversity and identity

Board members’ concerns, questions and comments were disseminated to the members of the Special Advisory Committee, and responses have been received and distributed to the full Board. This initiative will be referred to the Finance Committee at a later date.

With regard to the proposed textbook adoption, the Director of the Bilingual Program explained that current materials do not provide a bridge between English and students’ native language and lack academic rigor. The Textbook Committee reviewed proposals from four different vendors, and the final

selection was based on the vendor's differentiation of instruction, online component, and variety of resources. At the time that the ESA Committee met, a resolution had not yet been developed for the textbook adoption, but this is the only reason that it cannot be advanced with committee recommendation (Resolution No. 2015-16: 773).

Members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee also learned about the principles of "connected communities" from the Executive Director of Connected Communities, Inc., LaShunda Leslie-Smith. Dr. Shaun Nelms and Dr. Larry Ellison discussed plans to create a partnership between School No. 33 and East High School to create a "cradle to career" pipeline and a neighborhood community.

A wider variety of supports would be provided to students in these schools, with greater continuity as students advance from elementary to secondary school. The partnership would receive support from the Farash Foundation to provide a more holistic service model to students and families in the neighborhood. ESA Committee members expressed a number of concerns about the proposal:

- Conflict with Parent Preference/Managed Choice policy by formally designating School No. 33 and East High School as "neighborhood schools"
- Conflict with NYS law requiring parental choice of PreK programs, rather than giving student placement preference to those residing within the school neighborhood
- Ability of schools to establish partnerships without Board approval or amendment to existing policies
- Ability of schools to recruit students from the surrounding neighborhood by engaging in more outreach efforts
- Concern about school partnerships leading to gentrification and supplanting African American neighborhoods and/or undermining the education of African American children

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Thursday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, following the Finance Committee Meeting.

### **Community and Intergovernmental Relations Committee (CIGR)**

**Chair Cynthia Elliott:** The Community & Intergovernmental Relations Committee did not meet during the month of May. The next CIGR Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

### **Policy Committee**

**Chair Willa Powell:** The Policy Committee did not meet during the month of May. The next Policy Committee Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 14<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.

### **Board Governance Committee**

**Chair Elizabeth Hallmark:** Commissioner Hallmark noted that the Board recognizes its responsibility to evaluate the Superintendent on a regular basis to provide the highest quality leadership for the Rochester City School District. The Board's performance appraisal of the Superintendent is offered to provide an evaluation of their performance against assigned duties, establish long and short term goals, place priorities on tasks which are most critical to the progress of the District and to receive commendation for his accomplishments as the Superintendent of Schools.

Understanding the need for a comprehensive evaluation tool to assess the performance of the superintendent, the Governance Committee convened as a Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, May 17<sup>th</sup> to discuss SuperEval, an online evaluation system for school superintendents. SuperEval is based

on an evaluation rubric developed by the New York State Council of School Superintendents. The evaluation tool is designed to assess performance in the following areas:

- Financial Management
- Human Resources Management
- Organizational Effectiveness
- Communication and Collaboration
- Community Involvement/Partnerships and Volunteers; and
- Personal Characteristics

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, June 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. This meeting will also be convened as a Committee of the Whole to continue discussion of the SuperEval evaluation system, consider acceptance of the Annual Board Committee Meeting Calendar, and confirm a retreat date in July.

### **President's Report**

**Board President Van Henri White:** President White noted that at the April Business Meeting, the Board of Education passed a resolution which paved the way for Dr. Joy DeGruy to offer a series of professional development seminars to District staff. He explained that throughout the week, Dr. DeGruy touched on the most controversial and sensitive issue in American history, racism, with members of the District's leadership including members of the Board, Parent Advisory Council, Bilingual Educational Council, cabinet, collective bargaining units, and the Community Task Force. The purpose of the training was to insure that the District's leadership understands the need for and the value of such programming and is ready to supervise and champion its implementation throughout the District. President White thanked the Administration for bringing such an enlightening training series to the Rochester community.

President White mentioned that he attended Hillside's Senior Celebration at the Auditorium Theatre where over 450 seniors celebrated their upcoming graduation. He also noted the efforts of the District's Information Technology team, led by Annmarie Lehner team, in working to launch *ParentLink*, a smart phone application aimed at engaging parents. In concluding his report, he stated that the Board has received an excellent pool of applicants as a result of the 2016 superintendent search process, and plan to select a superintendent by the end of June.

### **VIII. Resolutions**

**2015-16: 710:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Powell. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Adopted 7-0.

**2015-16: 711-718:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Powell. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Adopted 6-1 with Vice President Elliott dissenting.

**2015-16: 719:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Cruz. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0.

**2015-16: 720:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Hallmark. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0.

**2015-16: 721-723:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Hallmark. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-1 with Vice President Elliott dissenting.

**2015-16: 724-729:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Hallmark. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0.

**2015-16: 730:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Cruz. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Adopted 5-2 with Vice President Elliott and Commissioner Evans dissenting.

**2015-16: 731-732:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Hallmark. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0.

**2015-16: 741-743:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-1 with Vice President Elliott dissenting.

**2015-16: 744:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 5-1 with President White abstaining due to familial relationship and Vice President Elliott dissenting.

**2015-16: 745:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-1 with Vice President Elliott dissenting.

**2015-16: 746-762:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Vice President Elliott. Adopted 7-0.

**2015-16: 763:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 5-0 with Vice President Elliott and Commissioner Evans abstaining due to professional relationship.

**2015-16: 764-774:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0.

**No requests submitted for Resolution No. 707-709, 712-717, 722, 724, and 733-740.**

**IX. Unfinished Business:** None.

**New Business:** Commissioner Powell introduced the Multicultural/Global Education Policy and Code of Conduct Policy as Discussion Items to the full Board. She noted that both policies have been vetted by the Policy Committee and will be considered at the June Business Meeting. No comments on the proposed policy were made by the commissioners.

**X. Motion to enter into executive session to discuss matters related to the employment of a specific individual** made by Commissioner Evans at 8:06 p.m. Seconded by Vice President Elliott. Motion carries 7-0.

**Motion to enter into open session** made by Vice President Elliott at 9:18 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. Motion carries 7-0.

**Motion to adjourn** was made by Vice President Elliott, seconded by Commissioner Powell at 9:20 p.m. Motion carries 7-0.

