

**ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Code of Conduct Work Session and Public Hearing**  
**June 2, 2016**  
**5:30 p.m.**

**Minutes**

**Attendance:** President White, Vice President Elliott, and Commissioners Adams, Cruz, Evans, Hallmark, and Powell; Interim Superintendent Cimusz, Deputy Superintendent Christiana Otuwa, General Counsel Charles Johnson, and Consultant Banke Awopetu-McCullough; Board Clerk Shanai Lee.

President White opened the hearing at 6:35 p.m.

President White opened the meeting and noted that Commissioner Powell, chair of the Board's Policy Development and Review Committee, would be chairing the meeting.

Commissioner Evans announced that he would be leaving the meeting to attend an event to promote anti-violence initiatives on behalf of the Board. He also commented on his support for the revised Code of Conduct Policy No. 1400, formerly identified as Policy No. 5300.

Commissioner Powell stated that the meeting's agenda would include an overview of the newly drafted policy by Deputy Superintendent Otuwa, General Counsel Charles Johnson, and Consultant Banke Awopetu-McCullough followed by a period of public comment and an opportunity for audience members to pose questions to the Board and members of the Administration.

Dr. Otuwa, Mr. Johnson, and Ms. Awopetu-McCullough delivered a presentation on the revised policy that included an analysis of the differences and similarities between the current and proposed policies, the proposed timeline for the policy implementation, and opportunities for improvement including stakeholder engagement.

Commissioner thanked the presenters for their overview and analysis of the policy and recognized the efforts of Commissioner Powell for efforts in facilitating and contributing to the proposed revision of the policy.

Following the presentation, Commissioner Powell requested public input and questions regarding the proposed revised Code of Conduct Policy.

The following speakers offered comments:

Parent Barbara Vankerhove spoke about the provisions of the Code related to restorative practices. She noted that these practices allow educators to move quickly to respond to incidents, lead to understanding of everyone involved, addresses what needs to be done to make things right and addresses what needs to be done in the future. She also spoke about support from the City of Rochester, she noted that the contract with SROs should

be in complete alignment with the Code of Conduct including restorative practices, youth development and responding to the needs of young people in our schools.

Staff member Dr. Jennifer Ghourklias addressed the Board as a former school principal of an urban school. She noted that the overall safety of her students was impacted by engaging restorative practices. She concluded her comments by noting that she supports the Code of Conduct and urges the Board to do so.

Parent Ericka Simmons stated that she supports the Code of Conduct. She noted that the Code would allow for safety and stability of all students regardless of the school that they attend. She concluded her comments by noting that she supports the Code and urges the Board to do so.

Community member Juan Corado spoke in support of the Code of Conduct and mentioned that as a student he was penalized often for not complying with rules. He urged the Board to support the revised Code as it would greatly impact school climate.

A student, unknown name, noted that she benefitted from some of the restorative practices that are outlined in the Code of Conduct and urged the Board to authorize the revised Code.

Community member James Solomon, member of BLACK and graduate of Joseph C. Wilson Magnet High School, applauded the Board for addressing the Code of Conduct. He urged the Board to authorize the revised Code.

A parent, unknown name, urged the Board to authorize the revised Code of Conduct.

A community member, unknown name, spoke about the relationship that she had with an administrator and how that relationship could be duplicated with the authorization of the revised Code of Conduct. She urged the Board to support the revised Code of Conduct.

Staff member Gail Harrison, urged the board to support the Code as an employee and grandmother of District students. She supports interventions such as PBIS, restorative practices, and other on-going programs that are similar in nature to those outlined in the revised Code of Conduct.

Community member Pat Mannix urged the board to support the Code of Conduct, and thanked the Board for their efforts in calling for a revision to the Code. She also spoke about recent remarks made by Dr. Urbanski that evoked fear, she noted that they mirror the structural and individual racist views and practices that exist.

Community member Greg Rice urged the Board to support the revised Code. He spoke about an incident where he was approached by students who had been suspended but wanted to get back into school. He noted that the Code calls for practices that would allow for a reduced amount of student suspensions.

Community member Sallie Williams urged the Board to support the revised Code of Conduct, noting that it will be life-changing to many students in the District. She spoke about personal experiences that led her to eventually drop-out of school.

Community member Elaine Urlan urged the Board to support the Code of Conduct. As a former District teacher she spoke about practices that she and some of her peers implemented to address the social emotional needs of students. She also expressed dismay about the some of the unions lack of support for the revised Code.

Parent Kenneth Lewis urged the Board to support the Code of Conduct.

Community member Ed Wose spoke about his work with incarcerated youth and how he has found that many people in the justice system have had negative experiences in school that led them to a life of crime. He urged the Board to authorize the revised Code of Conduct.

Community member Harry Pearl urged the Board to support the revised Code of Conduct.

Commissioner Powell opened the floor for questions.

Gail Harrison asked about the implementation of the Code and how it will be phased in across all schools. Mr. Johnson responded that the disciplinary offenses and actions that must be taken are well articulated and will be implemented throughout the system simultaneously.

Ericka Simmons asked about the union's support of Code. Dr. Otuwa noted that while some members of the District's unions might not support the Code they will be obligated to implement the revised Code of Conduct. President White added that the Board will play an active role in the implementation of the Code. Commissioner Powell pointed out that all unions were represented on the task force that developed the Code.

A community member asked about the social emotional supports articulated in the Code of Conduct. Dr. Otuwa noted that with the revised Code of Conduct there will be several social emotional supports in place to address the needs of students.

A community member asked what steps will be taken to protect LBGTQ students, and what supports will be provided for LBGTQ students. Commissioner Adams noted that she doesn't have a specific answer to respond to how data will be gathered. Mr. Johnson noted that these students will be protected as all students and staff are, per Policy 0100. In terms of supports, Dr. Otuwa noted that LBGTQ students would not be treated differently and the District would be open to collaboration with community partners to ensure that all students are treated equitably.

A community member asked for an explanation of the supports that have been committed to implement the revised Code of Conduct, how will the Board ensure that the Code is

implemented with the new Superintendent, and how the Board will ensure that the Code is implemented with fidelity. President White noted that the revised Code is a local policy that the new superintendent will have to comply with. Dr. Otuwa spoke about the resources that have dedicated to support the policy including additional staff supports including school psychologists and resource staff.

A community member asked if a receiver could override a Board-authorized Code of Conduct or any elements of the Code. Ms. Cimusz noted that the authority of the superintendent (or an independent receiver) does not supersede the policies of the Board.

Parent Ericka Simmons asked if there would be a concise, smaller edition of the revised Code of Conduct that can be used to educate and engage parents. Ms. Awopetu-McCullough noted that the District is working to develop a more concise version of the Code, she added that she would engage the PAC on the development. Mr. Johnson noted that the Code calls for the District to provide a condensed version of the Code to all parents in the fall of every year.

Commissioner Adams announced several proposed changes to the revised Code of Conduct. It was decided, with consensus, that the changes to the policy suggested by Commissioner Adams and others would be added to the proposed revision to the policy and be posted to the web by Friday, June 10<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Powell concluded the hearing at 9:00 p.m.