

# ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

## Business Meeting September 25, 2014

**Attendance:** President White, and Commissioners Adams, Campos, Cruz, Evans, and Powell; Superintendent Bolgen Vargas; Board Clerk Shanai Lee.

President White convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

- I. The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by an audience member.
- II. **Acceptance of Minutes:** Motion to accept the minutes of the August 21<sup>st</sup> Business Meeting, September 9<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting, and September 18<sup>th</sup> Contract for Excellence Public Hearing was made by Commissioner Adams and seconded by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 5-0 with Vice President Elliott and Commissioner Cruz absent.

Commissioner Cruz arrived at 6:39 p.m.

- III. **Recognition:** Commissioner Evans presented *Yes We Can Awards* to George Mather Forbes School No. 4 and Joseph C. Wilson Magnet High School. He noted that as a result of significant improvements in student achievement, the NYS Education Department has determined that two schools in the Rochester City School District are no longer considered “low-performing”. Wilson High School exceeded the NYS performance standards for improving the graduation rate and student performance on ELA and Math assessments for the last two years, although the school was only required to improve on one of these measures to be removed from “priority” status. School No. 4 also demonstrated significant improvement in students’ ELA and Math scores for the last two years, leading the NYS Education Department to remove the school from “focus” status.
- IV. **Speakers Addressing an Agenda Item:** Student Tyshon White spoke about the needs for arts curriculum in all District school to enhance student learning. Parent Howard Eagle spoke about issues related to outstanding complaints of parents.

Commissioner Powell made a motion to recess; President White seconded the motion at 6:52 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 7:00 p.m.

- V. **Speakers Not Addressing an Agenda Item:** No speakers were present.
- VI. **Superintendent’s Report:** Dr. Vargas delivered a presentation to update the Board on topics related to schools for September 2014. Dr. Vargas began the presentation by noting that 93% of the District’s Pre-K students are in full-day classes, this represents a 65% increase over last year, with a total of 2010 students registered for the 2014-15 school year. In discussing the achievement, Dr. Vargas noted that Schools No. 3, 17, 22, 29, 34 have expanded their daily schedule and Schools No. 9, 10, 23, 45, 46 are in the second year of expanded day. He also discussed attendance in saying attendance is improving after a slow start, from 83.7% on day one to 88.1% as of September 25, 2014. The District’s goal for attendance is 95% for all schools. Dr. Vargas also stated that graduation rates for the 2010 Cohort is projected to increase by 2.4%, going from 48.1% to 50.5%. In regards to the

District's budget, Dr. Vargas noted that the District is currently projected to spend nearly all of the \$5 million budget contingency. He assured the Board that does not create a crisis, but requires us to be fiscally prudent to avoid growing our budget gap for next year. Dr. Vargas concluded his presentation by describing some of the actions that he and his leadership team will take to control spending throughout the fiscal year, including the establishment of the Position Control Committee to review non-school vacancies to identify unneeded positions and review all non-school staffing positions prior to filling, school staffing adjustments, and pursuing new grant funding to support initiatives.

## **VII. Board Reports:**

### **Audit Committee**

*Chair Mary Adams:* The Audit Committee did not meet in the month of September. Commissioner Adams mentioned that the District's External Auditor, Freed Maxick, has started their fieldwork for the June 30, 2014 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) and the Board is anticipating receipt of selected financial schedules in early October to be forwarded to the City of Rochester for inclusion in their Financial Statements. The next Audit Committee meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2014 at 5:30 p.m.

### **Finance Committee**

*Chair Willa Powell:* The Finance Committee met on Thursday, September 18th to consider Resolution Nos. 2014-15: 187 through 216. The Finance Committee also reviewed the following proposed amendments to the 2014-15 RCSD budget, and recommends their approval. These budget amendments include additional expenditures for staffing increases above levels anticipated in the 2014-15 RCSD budget (total of 139 FTEs added). The staffing increases are largely due to a higher level of student enrollment than projected and slower progress than anticipated with regard to the redesign of Special Education. Chris Suriano, the Executive Director of Specialized Services, gave a presentation in the September Finance Committee meeting regarding the status of this redesign. The redesign involves expanding the continuum of instructional models and services to better meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. The Committee also recommends approval of the August Financial Report and the Year End Student Activity Funds Report for 2013-14. Commissioner Powell made a motion to accept the reports, seconded by Commissioner Evans. Motion carries 6-0 with Vice President Elliott absent. The next Finance Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.

### **Excellence in Student Achievement Committee**

*Chair Malik Evans:* The Excellence in Student Achievement Committee met on Tuesday, September 16<sup>th</sup> and discussed projected graduation rates and strategies to increase graduation rates. The Committee was provided with 2011 cohort information, including the total number of students, active and non-active, breakdown by limited English proficient (LEP) students, students with disabilities and economic disadvantaged students. In terms of strategies to increase graduation rates the Committee was presented with information on how transcript reviews are being conducted by counselors to develop a 4-year plan for each student that will be initiated after 8<sup>th</sup> grade to better equip students and families with the information and supports needed for graduation. The next Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> immediately following the Community and Intergovernmental Relations Committee meeting.

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

**Chair Cynthia Elliott:** The Community & Intergovernmental Relations Committee met on Tuesday, September 16th, and had a very intensive discussion about the role of police officers in schools. Rochester Police Chief Ciminelli and Sergeant Soto attended and shared important information about several programs used by School Resource Officers to divert students from involvement in the formal criminal justice system. The JAC (Juvenile Accountability Conferencing) program brings together the different groups of students involved in an altercation to listen to each other's perspectives, promote awareness of the consequences and harm done from their actions, and reach a resolution. Young people may also be referred to a Crime Seminar based on the number of infractions they have committed. Staff from the Probation Department and a young person who has been through the criminal justice system educate the referred youths about the consequences likely to ensue if their current behavior continues. Sergeant Soto reported that the majority of youth are referred to the Crime Seminar by the Probation Department and the schools.

Members of the CIGR Committee shared their concerns about the use of exclusionary discipline practices and involvement of students in the criminal justice system, which cut short their education and future prospects. We discussed the importance of obtaining input from RPD and from the community to ensure that effective policies and practices are developed in the District. The Police Chief and Sergeant Soto, who supervises School Resource Officers, identified the use of cell phones (Facebook and YouTube) and a lack of structure in schools (i.e. students roaming the hallways) as significant factors in incidents involving students. They also expressed a desire to serve as a mentor and role model to students, possibly having SROs teach classes on safety issues (e.g. DWI, safe driving).

The CIGR Committee also engaged in an intensive review of the proposed Inter-Municipal Agreement with the City for School Resource Officer services. The major concerns raised with regard to the proposed Agreement were: being "locked in" to a five-year contract for financial reasons, but without the option to modify the terms on an annual basis; there are no policies in place to support this or provide more specific guidelines; concern for student and family privacy protection in sharing directory information with SROs; concern for due process rights in the use of diversion programs for students; and concern for potential conflict of interest for SROs in "gray" areas in which an infraction could be subject to school disciplinary practices or to law enforcement involvement, and SROs' uncertainty of which set of rules/guidelines to follow.

### **Policy Committee**

**Chair Jose Cruz:** The Policy Committee met on Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup> to discuss Policy No. 5500, Student Records and Privacy. This policy continues as a discussion item per Commissioner Mary Adams's request to address adding photographs to student directory and new legislation that provides school districts with the opportunity to opt out of sharing student information with outside organizations. General Counsel, Edwin Lopez-Soto requested additional time to review the policy. The Committee also reviewed the Concussion Management sample policy from NYSSBA. The NYS Concussion Management Act went into effect in 2012 and reads "schools are advised to develop a written concussion management policy, but are not required to have such policy." Mr. Lopez-Soto requested additional time to review this information and report back to the committee in October on how the District will institute such a policy. Mr. Lopez-Soto reviewed proposed changes to Policy No. 6741, Professional Service Contracting. The Committee would like to review proposed changes to the policy including adding language for contracts that are over a certain dollar value to require prior approval from the Board. Next Policy committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Board Governance Committee**

**Chair Melisza Campos:** The Board Governance Committee met on September 18<sup>th</sup>. At the meeting the Committee discussed, the Superintendent Evaluation Process and Performance Objectives, the Upcoming Retreat, and the Reinstatement of the Personnel Committee. The Committee discussed the Superintendent evaluation process, including the evaluation tool and performance objectives. In discussing the upcoming retreat scheduled for this Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup> with members of the Board and the Superintendent, we considered the length (i.e. duration) of the retreat and proposed agenda items. Commissioner Elliott joined the Committee to discuss the proposed reinstatement of the Personnel Committee. She noted that the mission of the proposed committee would be to advise the Board on matters relating to policies and practices related to personnel, including but not limited to: compensation and benefits, labor relations and collective bargaining, staffing, and the organizational structure of the District. Members of the Committee suggested that an ad hoc committee addressing personnel-related issues be proposed to the Board so that the objectives and outcomes of the proposed committee can be assessed by the full Board before instituting another standing committee of the Board. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup> following the Finance and Policy Committee meetings. At that meeting, we will receive an overview of the Superintendent's goals and objectives for the current year and begin our regular review of the Board Bylaws, Policy No. 2300.

## **VIII. Resolutions**

**2014-15: 162-183:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-0 with Vice President Elliott absent.

**2014-15: 184-187:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-0 with Vice President Elliott absent.

**2014-15: 188-191:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-0 with Vice President Elliott absent.

**2014-15: 192-220:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Cruz. Seconded by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 6-0 with Vice President Elliott absent.

**2014-15: 221-237:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Powell. Seconded by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 6-0 with Vice President Elliott absent.

**2014-15: 238:** Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-0 with Vice President Elliott absent.

No information submitted for the following: Resolution No. 2014-15: 162, 166, 169, 175, 177, 178, 179, 180, 190, 232, and 233.

**IX. Unfinished Business:** None.

**X. New Business:** None.

**Motion to enter into executive session to discuss matters related to the employment of a specific individual** made by Commissioner Evans at 8:05 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Motion carries 6-0 with Vice President Elliott absent.

**Motion to enter into open session** made by Commissioner Powell at 9:10 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Motion carries 6-0 with Vice President Elliott absent.

- XI. Motion to adjourn** was made by Commissioner Campos, seconded by Commissioner Adams at 9:10 p.m. Motion carries 6-0 with Vice President Elliott absent.