

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting of the Whole
February 1, 2018

Attending: Commissioner Sheppard (Chair); Commissioners White, Powell, Hallmark, Elliott, Funchess and LeBron.

Parent Representative: Toyin Anderson

District Staff: Dr. Robin Hooper, Executive Director of Early Childhood Education; Andy MacGowan, Project Administrator; Dr. Beth Mascitti-Miller, Chief of School Innovation; Karl Kristoff, General Counsel.

Community Members: Dr. Dirk Hightower, Executive Director of the Children's Institute; Dr. Charles Infurna, Information Analyst with the Children's Institute and Principal Author of the RECAP Report

Board Staff: Debra Flanagan, Executive Assistant to the Board

Commissioner Sheppard called the meeting to order at 8:19PM.

I. Review Meeting Minutes from January 18, 2018

Motion by Commissioner Elliott to approve the minutes of the January 18, 2018 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee meeting. Seconded by Commissioner White. **Adopted 3-0.**

II. Discuss Findings from the 2016-17 Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership (RECAP) Report

Dr. Robin Hooper provided an overview of the 2016-17 RECAP Report, noting that this is the 20th year of the Partnership. She summarized the assessment instruments used in the study:

- Children: Brigance Screening indicating overall level of development and COR Advantage examining various aspects of development:
 - » Approach to learning;
 - » Social/emotional development;
 - » Physical development and health;
 - » Language, literacy, and communication;
 - » Math;
 - » Creative arts;
 - » Science and technology;
 - » Social studies;
 - » School readiness

- Classrooms: Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-3) and CLASS, which examine teacher interaction with children, classroom environment, instruction, and behavior management.

- Families: Parent surveys

Dr. Hooper reported that the District's PreK programs currently serve 68% of the four-year-old children (2100) and 37% of the three-year-old children (1150) in the City of Rochester. She noted that approximately 800-900 children in these age groups have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 400 of whom are enrolled in District PreK programs. The remaining 400-500 children with IEPs are receiving services through the District.

Currently, the District's PreK program operates with approximately 200 teachers at 66 sites, 29 of which are in RCSD elementary schools and 20 in community-based organizations.

Dr. Hooper provided an update regarding new developments in early childhood education in the District:

- » The new Rochester Early Childhood Education Center at 107 North Clinton Avenue is now fully operational, and has been drawing very high need families. Progress has been demonstrated in terms of fostering the development of the children at this center.
- » The Kindergarten Prep program has shown promising results from last year, the first year of implementation. This is especially significant because the program serves the most fragile children entering UPK. Kindergarten Prep is being piloted at the Rochester Early Childhood Education Center and the Florence S. Brown PreK Center.
- » A new Rochester Area Parent Program has been launched, based on the successful Chicago Parent Program and funded through the Children's Institute.
- » The RFP process has been completed for contracting with community-based PreK providers.
- » Some evidence of effectiveness has already been obtained for the new Pyramid Model of Preschool Social-Emotional Development, which is being implemented in all RCSD PreK programs.

With regard to the assessment findings for children in RCSD PreK programs, Dr. Hooper pointed out that a higher percentage of younger children (i.e. three-year-old children in Early PreK, or EPK) performed at developmentally appropriate levels than their older peers (i.e. four-year-old children in UPK). She noted that both age groups continue to grow significantly through their participation in PreK programs, but language, literacy and communication continue to be a challenge. Dr. Hooper added that attendance also continues to be a significant factor in terms of growth and kindergarten readiness.

Commissioner Funchess inquired about the District's capacity to provide EPK for three-year-old children in Rochester. Dr. Hooper replied that all classes are full, but a few agencies have been added through the recent RFP process. She explained that additional funding would be needed to expand current capacity, which is one of the District's goals.

Commissioner Elliott asked whether additional space for PreK will be created with the Facilities Modernization Program. Dr. Hooper stated that she has been collaborating with the Facilities Department to increase the number of PreK classrooms in the District:

- Addition of one class at School No. 16, for a total of three PreK classes;
- Addition of two classes at School No. 7, for a total of three classes (one EPK and two UPK)

Andy MacGowan reported that District PreK programs have historically earned high scores in terms of the classroom environment and teacher competency. He noted a slight decline in 2016-17 on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, primarily due to an influx of new teachers in the EPK program. Mr. MacGowan stated that the CLASS scores indicated continued growth in UPK and EPK, with almost identical scores for both programs. He pointed out that improvement is needed in the areas of instructional support and concept development, which are commonly weaker aspects of PreK programs throughout the country.

Mr. MacGowan commended Dr. Dirk Hightower for pointing to the need for improved parent engagement several years ago because this prompted significant changes in the PreK program. He noted that the District has implemented the Rochester Area Parent Program and utilizes different surveys to gauge parent satisfaction and identify specific areas for improvement. Mr. MacGowan discussed the results from the parent survey, indicating continued high levels of satisfaction with the program meeting the child's needs, quality of teaching, and overall quality. He reported that 90-94% of parents rated each of these dimensions at least a "B" on the grading scale.

In examining the impact of children's participation in RCSD PreK programs, Mr. MacGowan presented data showing the change in various aspects of development from fall to spring. Children in the EPK program experienced approximately one year of growth from fall 2016 to spring 2017, while those in the UPK program had an average of 20 months growth during that time. Mr. MacGowan pointed out that language, literacy, and communication continue to be the weakest developmental area for the majority of children in the PreK program.

Commissioner Funchess inquired about possible reasons for the difficulties children in Rochester experience in language, literacy and communication. Dr. Hooper explained that many parents simply do not know the importance of engaging their young child in conversation. Many people are under the impression that very young children are not able to engage in conversation, and adults tend to speak with young children in terms of one-way commands or directions. This limits the child's participation and does not encourage them to describe or express their thoughts or feelings.

Commissioner Elliott emphasized the importance of providing information to parents about the significance of asking questions, inviting their child to express their thoughts and feelings, and involving their child in a conversation.

Referring to the section of the presentation regarding kindergarten readiness, Dr. Dirk Hightower pointed out that this involves more than just the child's level of development. He noted that the school has to be ready to receive the child at their current level of development, parents have to be ready to provide the environment and stimulation their child's needs, and the community has to be supportive of families and schools. Dr. Hightower reported that when the school, parents and community are prepared, the child becomes much more ready to attend school.

Commissioner Elliott asked about longitudinal studies examining the impact of participation in RCSD EPK and UPK programs on academic performance in later grades. Mr. MacGowan replied that children in RCSD UPK programs have been tracked as far as 3rd grade, and differences have been shown. He acknowledged that more work needs to be done to follow these students to obtain a clear

indication of the impact of PreK on later academic achievement.

Commissioner Elliott pointed out that children begin to become disengaged from school in 3rd and 4th grades, and information is needed of the specific factors affecting student disengagement and decline in academic performance.

Commissioner Sheppard noted that consideration must be given to the way in which parents are treated from PreK to kindergarten to the early grades to understand the impact of parent engagement.

Commissioner Funchess noted that the District may be performing effective foundational work at the PreK level, but these efforts have to be sustained to support the gains that children have gained. She stated that all of the ancillary supports that children receive in PreK have to continue to be provided at each grade level.

Dr. Hooper reported that social-emotional development has been examined for young children in PreK for years, but this is just beginning to be considered in the early elementary grades.

Commissioner Elliott commented that only a small percentage of young children in the City are receiving the supports offered through the RCSD PreK program. Dr. Hightower replied that the City's birth cohort is 3100 and 2500 of those children are attending RCSD PreK programs (~81%).

Mr. MacGowan referred to the graph portraying changes in development from fall 2016 to spring 2017 for children in the UPK program. Only 3% of children entering UPK in fall 2016 were found to be kindergarten ready, but this increased to 57% by spring 2017. Mr. MacGowan explained that kindergarten readiness is determined by an overall score of at least "4" on the COR Advantage assessment, with none of the scores falling below "3.75" for each specific aspect of development. He pointed out that many UPK children score highly in all areas at the end of the school year, but fail to attain the minimum 3.75 score in language, literacy and communication and therefore are not deemed kindergarten ready.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about efforts to address developmental lags in language, literacy and communication for young children in the PreK program. Dr. Hooper responded that current early literacy initiatives will continue, with an emphasis on pre-writing and writing skills because these particular areas have been lacking in the past.

Commissioner LeBron commented on the relationship between cultural competence, early literacy and parent education, emphasizing the importance of showing parents practical strategies for incorporating literacy into daily activities. Dr. Hightower added that summer programming is critical in preventing learning loss before a child enters kindergarten. Mr. MacGowan reported that children experience approximately 30% learning loss over the summer from PreK to kindergarten. He added that RECAP has also been examining the impact of attendance on learning loss in PreK over the last few years.

Commissioner Sheppard suggested that the Community & Intergovernmental Relations Committee address the issue of summer learning loss from PreK to kindergarten by exploring partnerships with library programs, and also consider mechanisms for informing parents of the significance of early childhood literacy and communication.

Action Item: The Community & Intergovernmental Relations (CIGR) Committee will consider ways to address the issue of summer learning loss from PreK to kindergarten, specifically in exploring partnerships with local libraries. To address the developmental lags that many young children in Rochester have in language, literacy and communication, the CIGR Committee will also consider mechanisms for informing parents of the significance of engaging their child in conversation and introducing them to a variety of linguistic forms (e.g. singing, poetry, books, etc.)

Dr. Hightower explained that the summer PreK program is quite intensive, with children attending five days per week for 6 hours per day. To maximize consistency, the summer program uses the same teachers and constructs as those introduced during the school year. Mr. MacGowan added that the impact of summer learning loss leads to kindergarten students not getting to new material until November, and the first two months of the school year are spent on review.

Commissioner Powell inquired about the number of children participating in the RCSD PreK summer program. Dr. Hightower replied that only 305 out of 2100 PreK students attended the summer program last year. He noted that capacity exists, but funding is needed. Dr. Hooper pointed out that school districts are able to apply for NYS PreK grant funding for either the school year or the summer, but not for both.

Dr. Hightower referred to data reflecting the impact of PreK attendance on overall development and kindergarten readiness:

Attendance	% Children ready for Kindergarten
Severely Chronically Absent (80% Attendance or less)	49%
Chronically Absent (81-89% Attendance)	57%
High Attendance (90% or more)	65%

Mr. MacGowan reported that the District has been working with parents to improve PreK attendance, and the percentage of children with at least 90% attendance has increased this year. He stated that children gain from attending the RCSD PreK program, even if chronically absent – although the gains are not as great as if they attended more often.

Commissioner Sheppard requested a list of the interventions that have been used to improve attendance in the PreK program, noting that these could also be used for students at higher grade levels.

Action Item: Board members will be provided with the list of interventions used to improve attendance in RCSD PreK programs over the last year.

In terms of social-emotional development, Mr. MacGowan reported that 10-12% of children entering the PreK program have multiple risk factors. Although children in UPK experience approximately 20 months of growth on average, the growth is not in social-emotional development. The District adopted the Pyramid Model of Social-Emotional Development to address this issue, and the model is

specifically designed for PreK children. Dr. Hooper attributed the lack of social-emotional growth to increases in the number/percentage of young children who have experienced some type of trauma, noting that there have been increases in the number/percentage of children who have experienced homelessness.

Commissioner Sheppard inquired whether the District is tracking the prevalence of various risk factors affecting children entering the PreK program.

Action Item: Board members will be provided with information of the prevalence of the various risk factors affecting children entering the RCSD PreK program.

Mr. MacGowan presented additional detail regarding the classroom quality assessment (ECERS-3), pointing to a slight decrease from 2015-16 to 2016-17. He attributed the decline to the influx of new teachers last year into the EPK program.

Commissioner Elliott observed that the ECERS-3 includes assessment of teacher-child interaction, noting that this measure also reflects the need for cultural competence in teaching children in the District.

Mr. MacGowan emphasized that overall classroom quality scores have increased, even as RCSD PreK programs have expanded from 47 to 72 classrooms. He noted that RCSD PreK programs have historically scored 1.8 standard deviations above the national average.

Commissioner Elliott asked about the efforts needed to improve instructional support at the PreK level. Dr. Hooper responded that PreK programs nation-wide struggle with instructional support, which involves concept development, use of open-ended questions to extend the child's learning beyond the current activity, encourage critical thinking, and promote vocabulary development. Dr. Hightower discussed the use of a continuous improvement model, in which a committee reviews specific aspects of classroom quality to identify particular training and support needs. He explained that growth in teaching quality over time depends on repeated review and monitoring to tailor professional development and supports according to need. Mr. MacGowan noted that all of the assessments are intended to support teachers and individual scores are only reported to the teacher.

Mr. MacGowan explained that the Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership (RECAP) has been searching for a family engagement model specific to early childhood, and has adopted the Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality (FTRQ) measures. He stated that the measures were developed by Westat and Child Trends through an extensive research process, which placed high priority on applicability to:

- Ethnically, racially and culturally diverse populations;
- A variety of early care and education settings;
- Families at any income level;
- Families that may be Spanish-speaking

Mr. MacGowan reported that the FTRQ has been piloted at community-based PreK sites. Dr. Hightower presented data comparing RCSD PreK pilot results to those from a national Head Start field study. He pointed out that the RCSD pilot already outperforms the national sample on many of the FTRQ measures. Dr. Hightower stated that he plans to examine the impact of changes in PreK

classrooms on parents' perceptions of program quality.

Commissioner Powell asked about the participation rate on the FTRQ survey. Mr. MacGowan replied that the response rate was approximately 40% with the previous survey, which contained 67 questions. He stated that the survey has been reduced to 25 questions this year.

Commissioner Sheppard requested the list of 25 questions presented to parents in the FTRQ survey.

Action Item: Board members will be provided with the list of 25 questions presented to parents of children in RCSD PreK programs in the FTRQ survey.

Toyin Anderson inquired about the way in which RECAP selected the particular instruments for assessing the RCSD PreK program. Mr. MacGowan explained that the District received a grant to evaluate a variety of assessment instruments, and the COR Advantage and Teacher-Child Rating System were found to be the most rigorous, valid, and reliable. Dr. Hightower pointed out that all PreK programs in Rochester use the same measures and share professional development (e.g. Head Start, agencies).

III. Update on the Status of School No. 41

Beth Mascitti-Miller presented a number of documents pertaining to planning for Kodak Park School No. 41, which is to close and re-open as a substantially new school. She referred to the following critical deadlines in this process:

- February 14th: a draft of the school closure plan and of the design for the new school must be submitted to the NYS Education Commissioner
- February 23rd: the NYS Education Commissioner's feedback must be incorporated into the draft plans to obtain their approval by this date
- March 1st: deadline for final school closure plan and petition to register the new school
- March 23rd: deadline for the Board of Education to approve the school closure plan and the plan for opening the new school
- June 15th: final instructional plan for the new school submitted to the NYS Education Department
- June 29th: current school closes
- September: new school opens

Dr. Mascitti-Miller explained that the District will need to submit additional documentation and hire an independent monitor because School No. 41 has been a receivership school. She stated that the independent monitor will evaluate implementation of the plan and the quality of the program at the new school. Dr. Mascitti-Miller reported that meetings will continue to be held with parents, students, staff, and members of the school community throughout this process. She referred to an Advisory Team dedicated to providing guidance throughout the process, which includes parents, teachers, community members, and collective bargaining representatives.

Commissioner Funchess asked about the number of parents serving on the Advisory Team, expressing concern about parents being outnumbered by staff. Dr. Mascitti-Miller replied that four parents are on the Advisory Team.

Commissioner LeBron suggested including bilingual parents and parents of a child with special needs on the Advisory Team.

Action Item: Dr. Mascitti-Miller will provide information to Board members of the representation on the Advisory Team, and reach out to include bilingual parents and parents of a special needs child on the Advisory Team working on the transition for School No. 41.

Commissioner White commended Dr. Mascitti-Miller for providing an overview and timelines regarding the transition process, but noted the absence of information regarding the plan for the new school. He questioned how a new principal could be selected if there is no information about the plan or design for the new school. Dr. Mascitti-Miller presented a handout with a high-level overview of the ideas and plans for the new school at this point, noting that it is based on replicating highly selected schools in the District (e.g. School No. 15, 23, and 58):

- Focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math)
- Project-based learning
- Culturally relevant curriculum
- Highly individualized programs and intensive supports
- Student voice and choice in the arts and STEM enrichment
- Use of restorative practices and a trauma-informed approach

Dr. Mascitti-Miller noted that the letter from the NYS Education Commissioner specifies certain elements to include in the new school. She stated that the new school will be PreK to 6th grade, and retain all of the classes and teachers for children with autism spectrum disorders. Dr. Mascitti-Miller pointed out that no more than 49% of current teachers can be retained in the new school, and this will include the teachers of students with autism.

Commissioner LeBron asked about the search for a new principal for the school. Dr. Mascitti-Miller replied that all RCSD principals have been canvassed, and an open call was issued with an emphasis on the school being newly redesigned. She stated that the Advisory Team has been discussing the qualities and qualifications needed in a new principal, and the way in which candidates will be screened.

Ms. Anderson inquired whether all of the students currently attending School No. 41 will have the option to remain and attend the new school. Dr. Mascitti-Miller responded that District staff will meet with each of the families by March to discuss the changes to the school and offer the option for their child to stay.

Ms. Anderson questioned whether all of the parents serving on the Advisory Team have chosen to have their child stay in the newly redesigned school. Dr. Mascitti-Miller replied that these parents have not been asked about their intent or future plans for their child's school placement.

Ms. Anderson raised concerns about these parents assisting with the transition process for the school, when their actual investment in the school's future is uncertain.

Commissioner Elliott suggested adding parents to the Advisory Team, rather than asking parents about

their plans for the future at this point.

Commissioner Powell expressed concern about fundamental changes in the curriculum, noting that most RCSD elementary schools are based on the Common Core. She asked about other options for the school curriculum. Dr. Mascitti-Miller explained that the newly designed school will be based on equity, relationships, cultural relevance, and project-based inquiry, as at the World of Inquiry School No. 58. She stated that the new school is to have academic rigor and offer a continuum of services to better meet students' needs.

Commissioner Sheppard asked whether the Board will have an opportunity to provide input into the school redesign. Karl Kristoff noted that Board approval is sought only **after** the NYS Education Commissioner has provided feedback and the plan has been finalized, but the details of the process are up to the Board and Administration.

Commissioner Sheppard inquired whether a time extension would be granted if the Board rejects the plan that has been reviewed and submitted to the NYS Education Commissioner. Mr. Kristoff replied that if the Board does not approve the plan, the NYS Education Commissioner can choose to appoint a receiver to take over the school.

Commissioner White pointed out that this situation involves a different set of rules and the truncated timeframe prevents the Board from participating in the design of the new school.

Dr. Mascitti-Miller offered to attend the Leadership Meeting next week to discuss the plans for the new school in greater detail.

IV. Follow-Up on Action Items from January 18, 2018 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting of the Whole

Commissioner Sheppard announced that she plans to refer all of the Action Items from the January 18, 2018 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting of the Whole to the new Special Education Advisory Committee because the information will be useful in the Advisory Committee's work.

Meeting adjourned at 9:54PM.