

EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WHOLE

July 10, 2018

Attending: Commissioner Sheppard (Chair); Commissioners Elliott and Hallmark (arrived 5:41PM).

Parent Representative: Toyin Anderson

District Staff: Dr. Giamartino, Chief of Accountability; Rob Ulliman, Planning Director; Dr. Cecilia Golden, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching & Learning; Harry Kennedy, Chief of Human Capital Initiatives (HCI); Maurice Snipes, Director of Diversity Initiatives; Ann Brady, Senior HCI Director; and Dr. Jason Willis, Executive Director of African – African American Studies

Board Staff: Debra Flanagan

Commissioner Sheppard convened the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting of the Whole at 5:33PM.

I. Review Minutes of June 12, 2018 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting of the Whole

Motion by Commissioner Elliott to approve the minutes of the June 12, 2018 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting of the Whole. **Adopted 2-0.**

II. Presentation of 4th Quarter Academic Reports regarding Preliminary 2014 Cohort Graduation Rates for June 2018

Dr. Ray Giamartino presented preliminary data regarding graduation rates for the 2014 cohort, noting that the figures are subject to change because of the need for in-depth examination and verification of accuracy. He explained that this is part of the process for uploading the data to the NYS Education Department by the end of July.

Dr. Giamartino reported a slight anticipated increase in the June graduation rate of 1% above that for June 2017, and 345 students from the 2014 cohort are registered for summer programming to assist them in graduating in August. He explained that the School Chiefs, principals, and school counselors designed summer programming according to the needs of students in the 2014 cohort for credit accumulation and Regents exams.

Dr. Giamartino noted that graduation rates seem to have increased significantly this year for East High School, School of the Arts, and the School Without Walls. Preliminary data indicates that several schools are expected to experience significant declines in graduation rates this year: Integrated Arts & Technology High School, Wilson Magnet High School, and Vanguard High School.

Commissioner Elliott emphasized the importance of RCSD data focusing on the factors affecting students' ability to progress academically and to graduate on time, rather than providing comparisons

with other school districts in New York State. Mr. Ulliman replied that detailed data for RCSD is presented on the next several slides of the presentation, which illustrate June graduation rates for the 2013 and 2014 cohorts for each school.

Toyin Anderson observed that more of the secondary schools in the District seem to have reductions in June graduation rates this year. She questioned when District officials became aware of this situation, and of the interventions that have been put in place. Dr. Giamartino recalled that the School Chiefs gave a presentation to the ESA Committee after the 3rd quarter to describe their efforts at credit recovery and marking period recovery to assist students in progressing toward graduation. He stated that the specific interventions were based on students' credit accumulation and Regents exam results.

Dr. Cecilia Golden noted that evaluation of student academic progress should include accumulated credits, Regents exams, grades, and student work. She explained that a comparison of students' actual work with the level of work required is essential in identifying students' specific needs and opportunities for mentoring and coaching. This comparison is also useful in assessing teachers' professional development needs.

Dr. Giamartino discussed efforts to provide a variety of flexible options to students for credit recovery and marking period recovery (e.g., online, Saturday school, evening sessions with teachers, after school).

Commissioner Sheppard commented on problems in the past with uploading student and school performance data in sufficient time for effective tracking and early intervention, as well as reporting to the Administration and the Board of Education. She emphasized the need for progress monitoring data being entered into the system within 1-2 days to enable effective action to be taken.

Commissioner Elliott pointed out that the School Chiefs are responsible for holding school administrators and staff accountable for inputting key performance data essential to monitoring student performance and providing early intervention. She emphasized the need for more specific information to determine the factors underlying the data and to identify ways to improve student academic progress.

Dr. Giamartino referred to the newly activated Data Dashboard, which enables District officials and school staff to monitor student progress by drilling down to detail including credits, courses, individual programs, attendance, Regents exams, and behavioral issues. He noted that the Data Dashboard should facilitate dissemination of data in real time for progress monitoring and developing interventions tailored to individual students according to their needs.

Commissioner Sheppard requested that Dr. Golden coordinate the School Chiefs' attendance or provision of written Quarterly Academic Progress Reports to the ESA Committee on a regular basis.

Action Item: Dr. Golden will coordinate the School Chiefs' attendance or provision of written Quarterly Academic Progress Reports to the ESA Committee throughout the school year. The reports are to provide academic progress data after each marking period for each school, methods being used to assist students based on their needs, and ways in which school administrators and staff are being held accountable for tracking each student and implementing interventions.

Ms. Anderson inquired whether the overall estimated 1% increase in the graduation rate this year is primarily attributable to the schools expected to perform well, rather than representing a district-wide improvement. Dr. Giamartino confirmed this assessment, noting that a number of schools did not meet the target graduation rate established in their School Comprehensive Improvement Plan this year.

Ms. Anderson questioned how the District will raise the graduation rate and improve student academic progress, particularly since the majority of secondary schools actually had a decline in their graduation rate this year.

III. Introduction of Draft *High School to Higher Education Policy*

Commissioner Sheppard introduced a new draft policy that she developed entitled, *High School to Higher Education Policy*. She explained that the intent of the policy is to ensure that each student has a clear, concrete plan for career and education after high school graduation. The *High School to Higher Education Policy* directs school staff to provide opportunities and assistance to students in identifying a career path and preparing for the additional education and credentials required to be successful in this pursuit.

Commissioner Sheppard requested that Committee members review and comment on the draft policy proposal in time for it to be presented in the August Policy Committee meeting.

Action Item: Ms. Flanagan will distribute the draft *High School to Higher Education Policy* to all Board members, requesting their feedback in time for the proposed policy to be presented in the August 7th Policy Committee meeting.

Commissioner Sheppard added that she plans to present and discuss the proposed policy with school counselors, community partners and other stakeholders.

IV. Discuss District Outreach Efforts with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)

Harry Kennedy described efforts that have been made by the District to establish relationships with historically black colleges and universities (HBCU), including the October 2017 HBCU Fair and more than 11 recruitment trips to these colleges and universities. He reported that each of these recruitment trips included work sessions with HBCU to develop strategies to improve recruitment and retention of teachers of color in the District. Mr. Kennedy stated that all of the HBCU reported significant declines in enrollment in teaching education, particularly among students of color. He pointed out that this trend affects the availability of teachers of color throughout the country.

Mr. Kennedy discussed the need to establish relationships and a pipeline for recruiting graduates from HBCU. He pointed out that the key to tapping into this network is the United Negro College Fund, which already has established networks with over 1700 HBCU and a rich database of students enrolled in these colleges and universities. Mr. Kennedy reported having a productive meeting with Mary Williams, the Director of Outreach and Recruitment for the United Negro College Fund. As a result of this meeting, the United Negro College Fund is developing a proposal to identify ways to collaborate to enhance diversity in the RCSD workforce, particularly among teachers.

Commissioner Sheppard inquired whether consideration has been given to having RCSD graduates attend an HBCU, and offering incentives for them to return to the District to teach. Mr. Kennedy described a local initiative in which the District collaborates with churches that provide scholarships. The District offers scholarship recipients an open contract for a teaching position upon completion of their college degree.

In terms of marketing and recruiting HBCU graduates, Mr. Kennedy identified the following incentives offered by RCSD to prospective teachers:

- Loan forgiveness
- Great benefits
- Competitive pay
- Career in Teaching program, which provides a mentor to new teachers for the first year

Mr. Kennedy noted that New York has the most difficult teaching certification requirements in the country, which has been a barrier for many prospective teachers of color. He stated that offering reciprocity with other states in teaching certification would facilitate recruitment of teaching candidates from other parts of the country. Mr. Kennedy reported that this issue has been discussed with Bill Clark of the Urban League, who also serves on the NYS Education Advisory Committee.

Commissioner Elliott asked about the way in which the District treats applicants of color because this has been an issue in the past. She also inquired about the possibility of the District offering a course and possibly an exam regarding urban experience and cultural diversity before hiring a candidate. Mr. Kennedy replied that his examination of the process for recruiting and responding to applicants of color led to restructuring and development of an induction/orientation course that includes the challenges of working in an urban environment. He added that this course is being developed in collaboration with School Chief Dr. Idonia Owens and Dr. Jason Willis, Executive Director of African – African American Studies.

Commissioner Hallmark requested additional information about models being examined and factors being considered in pursuing reciprocity in teaching certification.

Dr. Golden reported that she is also a member of the NYS Education Advisory Committee, and declared that the State of New York is not about to change teaching certification requirements after years of efforts to make them more rigorous. She emphasized the need to consider other strategies for hiring teachers of color, such as:

- Hiring candidates as long-term substitutes
- Offering assistance with the National Teachers' Exam

Dr. Golden described her experience at Southern University, in which students took three years of coursework prior to taking the National Teachers' Exam. Students who did not pass this exam were redirected to a different career path that consisted of an average annual pay level approximately \$30K less than the teaching profession. Dr. Golden reported that many students left college without a degree because of the difficulties in passing the National Teachers' Exam.

Mr. Kennedy pointed out that many prospective teachers of color struggle to pass the National Teachers' Exam because of the language used, the way in which it is written, and the writing requirements – all elements that are unrelated to their ability to teach. As a result, many prospective teachers of color end up changing career fields, taking additional courses, and graduating with greater amounts of debt. Mr. Kennedy stated that opportunities are being explored for collaborating with the United Negro College Fund to offer a course to prepare students for the National Teachers' Exam.

Commissioner Sheppard suggested ordering past National Teachers' Exams to identify specific barriers for prospective teachers of color, and to develop a course or other type of assistance that may be useful for their entry into the teaching profession.

Action Item: Dr. Golden will order past National Teachers' Exams for review by the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee to identify specific barriers to prospective teachers of color, and to develop a course or other type of assistance that may be useful for their entry into the teaching profession.

Mr. Kennedy provided a list of over 50 HBCU with which the District has a partnership and the ability to post job openings in their placement centers.

Dr. Golden commented that enhancing diversity in the school system is not only a District issue, but affects the entire community. For this reason, she suggested that the University of Rochester and the City collaborate with the District to offer incentives for new recruits to live in the City.

Commissioner Elliott stated that a small subsidy is currently offered to first-time homeowners in the City under the existing *Recruitment, Residence and Hiring Initiative Policy* (9240). She asserted that the amount of the subsidy is too low, and should be reconsidered.

Commissioner Sheppard recalled the data that Mr. Kennedy presented in the April 2018 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee meeting regarding progress in increasing diversity in the District's workforce. She requested regular updates on the results of this initiative.

Action Item: Mr. Kennedy will provide an update in the August and October Excellence in Student Achievement Committee meetings regarding progress toward increasing diversity in the District's workforce, particularly among teachers.

Commissioner Elliott expressed concern about the prospect of future staff layoffs due to the District's structural budget deficit, and that there will be disproportionate layoffs of staff members of color. Mr. Kennedy responded that the practice of firing staff members with the least amount of seniority creates significant difficulties in retaining employees of color. He emphasized the need to find a balance to prevent undermining all of the efforts being made currently to increase diversity in the District's workforce.

V. Discuss Plans for 2018-19 for African – African American Studies

Dr. Jason Willis, the new Executive Director of African – African American Studies, discussed his efforts to date and plans for the future to improve cultural responsiveness and understanding in the

District. He explained that he has been focusing on systems issues at the district, school and classroom levels (e.g. needs assessment, replicating and expanding current best practices).

Dr. Willis noted that a culturally responsive curriculum has been absent not only in the District, but throughout the country. For best practices and mentorship, he has reached out to the chairs of African American Studies Departments at Georgetown University, Temple University, and the University of Cincinnati.

Within the District, Dr. Willis has identified a number of opportunities for his involvement:

- Professional development: a one-hour session has been developed, and presented to three schools so far. The session describes services offered by the African – African American Studies Department, ways in which the Department can be a resource, and focusing on understanding the experiences of our students.

Dr. Willis described tripartite victimization of students due to:

- » Lack of identity
- » Lack of awareness and knowledge of cultural history and heritage
- » The way in which education is delivered, which contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline

He reported attending several committee meetings regarding the *Code of Conduct* and student suspension rates.

- Infusion of African American Studies into the core academic content areas:
 - » Read Aloud program
 - » Including culturally responsive materials in library services, Teaching & Learning in ELA and the core curriculum (including math and science)
 - » Elements of the Mosaic program used in the Greece School District under Barbara Deane-Williams' leadership
 - » Input from the Frederick Douglass consortium regarding infusion of culturally relevant material into the curriculum, and ways to support this effort in the schools
- Development of a pan-African curriculum to be implemented in all RCSD secondary schools in 2019-20, at least as electives.
- Enhance the African – African American Studies Department website to enable its use as a resource for all, regardless of their background or experience.
- Serve as the point person in the District for the REAL Team

Meeting adjourned at 6:55PM.