

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting of the Whole
July 20, 2017

Attending: Commissioners White, Adams, Hallmark, and Powell.

Parent Representative: Toyin Anderson

District Staff: Superintendent Barbara Deane-Williams; Michele Alberti, Executive Director of the Office of School Innovation; Keith Babuczszak, Executive Director of Career & Technical Education

Board Staff: Debra Flanagan

Commissioner White called the meeting to order at 5:39PM.

I. Review Minutes of the May 4, 2017 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Powell to approve the minutes of the May 4, 2017 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Hallmark. **Adopted 3-0.**

II. Review Resolution to allow Students from the *University Preparatory Charter School for Young Men* to be dually enrolled in the RCSD Career Pathways in Public Safety Program in 2017-18 (Resolution No. 2017-18: 77)

Keith Babuczszak explained that school districts are required by law to admit resident students into gifted, occupational education, and Special Education programs free of tuition, even if the students attend a charter school. He reported that 15 students from the *University Preparatory Charter School for Young Men* have requested admission into the Career Pathways in Public Safety program in 2017-18. Mr. Babuczszak noted that the students would attend the program for two class periods each day, from 7:30-9:00AM, and then return to the charter school. He stated that the District will issue bus passes for these students to travel to the Rochester Economic Opportunity Center (REOC) to attend the program, and the charter school will then transport these students to their campus for the remainder of the school day.

Commissioner Hallmark commented that the language in the resolution is confusing because it refers to “non-public schools”, although charter schools are considered public schools. She asked whether resident students attending private schools would also be required to be admitted into the program. Mr. Babuczszak replied that a pathway for admitting private school students does not currently exist, but could be discussed in the future.

Commissioner Powell questioned the purpose for obtaining Board of Education approval for this resolution, since admission of these charter school students is required by State law. Mr. Babuczszak explained that the process requires that written application be made to the Board of Education.

Commissioner Powell suggested modifying the language in the resolution to state that the Board “receives” the applications to admit these students, rather than “approves” their applications. She stated that this language would more accurately reflect the fact that the Board has no choice but to

approve admission of resident students into the program. Mr. Babuczszak noted that he will discuss the suggested revision with staff in the Law Department.

Action Item: Resolution No. 2017-18: 77 will be revised to state that the Board has “received” the written applications for charter school students to attend the *Career Pathways in Public Safety* program, rather than having “approved” these applications.

Commissioner White requested information about the history of admitting charter school students into the Career Pathways in Public Safety program. Mr. Babuczszak reported that the District has received some charter school students in this program since its inception. He pointed out that this same process was followed last year, and 7 students were admitted from the *University Preparatory Charter School for Young Men* in 2016-17. Mr. Babuczszak reported that NYS law requires families to submit a written application, and that these applications be presented to the Board.

Commissioner White asked about the financial implications of having charter school students enroll in a District program, particularly in terms of the District’s payment of charter school tuition. Mr. Babuczszak reported discussing this issue with the Chief Financial Officer, who suggested establishing an agreement regarding charter school tuition payments for these students. He added that he does not know about the process for creating this type of agreement.

Commissioner Hallmark pointed out that the dual legal requirements for school districts to pay charter school tuition for resident students and to admit these students into certain district programs essentially promotes the proliferation of charter schools at school districts’ expense.

Commissioner White questioned why resident students cannot be required to enroll in the District in order to attend these programs.

Commissioner Powell noted that admitting charter school students into these programs is not problematic on a space-available basis. She pointed out that if the number of charter school applicants necessitates the addition of a classroom, the District will have to incur additional staffing and instructional costs to accommodate them. Mr. Babuczszak explained that the 15 charter school students that have applied for admission to the Career Pathways in Public Safety program for 2017-18 are in different grade levels and would be taking different classes (i.e. police training, fire protection, 911 dispatch).

Commissioner Hallmark asked about priorities for admittance into these programs. Mr. Babuczszak confirmed that students enrolled in the District are given preference for placement in these programs.

Commissioner Powell contended that charter school tuition for these students should be pro-rated, since the District is providing instruction for a portion of their school day. Mr. Babuczszak replied that this was the basis of his discussion with staff members in the Finance Department, and this option is currently under consideration.

Karl Kristoff suggested discussing these concerns with members of the Cabinet to obtain additional information about capacity, staffing needs, and the impact of the requirement to admit charter school students into certain District programs.

Commissioner Powell inquired whether the Board is required to approve the written applications from

charter school students after receiving them. Mr. Babuczszak stated that he will discuss this question with staff in the Law Department.

Action Item: The concerns raised regarding the above resolution (Resolution No. 2017-18: 77) will be discussed with staff in the Law Department and with Cabinet members to obtain their feedback and recommendations.

Motion by Commissioner Powell to table Resolution No. 2017-18: 77 until the Cabinet and Law Department have had an opportunity for review and comment. Seconded by Commissioner Hallmark. **Adopted 3-0.**

III. Update regarding Development of the 2017-18 District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP)

Michele Alberti compared development of the 2017-18 District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP) under the leadership of Superintendent Deane-Williams to past practices. She stated that the main focus in previous years was the School Comprehensive Education Plans (SCEP), and less time and attention was paid to the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan. In contrast, Superintendent Deane-Williams has focused on the DCIP as the foundation and framework for all of the school improvement plans. Ms. Alberti explained that without this foundation, past SCEP plans sometimes highlighted priorities that were not aligned with the supports provided by the District.

Ms. Alberti described development of the 2017-18 DCIP as the most collaborative and comprehensive process undertaken in the District with respect to improvement plans. She reported that many meetings and focus groups were held with parents, students, community partners and staff to create the 100-Day Plans. She stated that tenet meetings were conducted throughout the year to examine the impact of these plans on student achievement. From this work, a theory of action and specific values were developed, which formed the basis for the four pillars of the entire strategic framework:

- Promote the well-being of the whole child, whole school, and whole community
- Ensure powerful learning for every student
- Build capacity to ensure comprehensive school improvement
- Cultivate understanding, collaboration, partnerships and advocacy for equity and justice for all

From this foundation, supporting strategies and the necessary essential elements for each pillar were identified to lead to attainment of DCIP goals.

Ms. Alberti illustrated the way in which this framework is linked to each of the six tenets in the NYS Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE), which are used to identify specific areas in need of improvement.

Tenet 1: District Leadership and Capacity:

Goal: Central Office will organize and improve to support student and school achievement through redesigned professional learning, induction, mentoring and support systems to improve team performance.

Tenet 2: School Leader Practices and Decisions:

Goal: School Chiefs will work in service to support school leader practices and decisions to increase student achievement as evidenced by improved attendance, school climate, students reading on grade level and graduating on time.

Tenet 3: Curriculum Development and Support:

Goal: Creation and implementation of a standards-based culturally, linguistically, and relevant responsive curriculum, resulting in cognitively demanding personalized learning.

Tenet 4: Teacher Practices and Decisions:

Goal: Implementation of multi-tiered systems of support with a strong focus on Tier 1/core instruction consisting of grade level expectations and assessment for learners, ensuring instruction is powerful for every student.

Commissioner Hallmark inquired about plans for 10 days of professional development for teachers to focus on curriculum and instruction. Superintendent Deane-Williams noted that a 10-day intensive block of professional development is needed to obtain a baseline for all RCSD teachers, so that the remaining half-days of training scheduled throughout the school year can be used effectively. She stated that the 10-day block of training is needed to assist teachers in instructing students to grade level, particularly in reading and math. She asserted that there has been a gap between the level of training provided in the District and the level of instruction that teachers need to provide in the classroom. Superintendent Deane-Williams noted that the half-days of training for teachers throughout the school year will be used for additional practice and coaching. She suggested providing the 10-day intensive for one to two years to close this gap, and then offering a 5-7 day block of professional development on a regular basis in the future. The Superintendent reported that 5-7 days of concentrated professional development is fairly standard in other school districts. She added that opportunities are being explored for pooling some of the remaining grant funds to offer a training session in August specifically regarding reading and literacy.

Commissioner Adams asked whether the plans for the August training are included in a resolution regarding a literacy summit. Ms. Alberti replied that the staff at School No. 45 will participate in the training effort because of their experience and the results obtained in student achievement.

Superintendent Deane-Williams discussed the importance of matching the level of actual work in the classroom with the expectations of NYS assessments to enable students to succeed. She stated that this does not mean teaching to the test, but ensuring that students are provided the grade level curriculum on which they will be assessed. The Superintendent reported that efforts are focused on ensuring that teachers know the grade level standards, and that instructional practice and materials are aligned with these standards. She stated that Tier 2 and 3 tutoring are being provided to assist students in catching up to grade level standards, and the master schedule will allow tutoring to be provided on a routine basis in every school during the year.

Tenet 5: Student Social and Emotional Development and Health:

Goal: Strengthen school climate by developing a social-emotional framework consisting of the work in:

- Restorative practices and Help Zones
- Training and ongoing support of policies, procedures and practices in the Code of Conduct

- The Relationship Model of Educational Intervention (i.e. “Knowing Our Students – Their Culture, Heritage and Realities”)
- Culturally relevant curriculum
- Trauma-responsive schools

Ms. Alberti discussed the importance of focusing on training and support for practices, policies and procedures that are embedded in the Code of Conduct, rather than just learning about the content of the Code. She reported that the focus on trauma-responsive schools represents another significant change from last year’s District Comprehensive Improvement Plan.

Commissioner Adams observed that the relationship model of educational intervention involves teachers embracing more comprehensive ways of interacting with students and families, but the specific elements outlined in the Plan seem to be much more narrowly defined (i.e. “Knowing Our Students – Their Culture, Heritage and Realities”). She suggested omitting these elements from Tenet 5 to prevent limiting the application of the model.

Tenet 6: Family and Community Engagement:

Goal: Improve experiences of families’ and community partners’ interactions with Central Office and schools by implementing improved communication structures and invitational school practices.

Commissioner Adams requested a definition of “invitational school practices”. The Superintendent explained that the team working on this goal examined the research related to school climate and found a number of different components. She reported that the School Based Decision-Making Team was struggling with the “Family Friendly Schools” model in terms of rubrics, application in practice, and a deeper understanding of its meaning. Superintendent Deane-Williams stated that the Team began exploring similar models, such as “Invitational Schools”. She noted that both of these models offer national certification, but the Rochester Teachers’ Association and the parent group decided to attend the Invitational Schools conference in October to learn more about this approach. She observed that teachers’ desire to initiate this model is a positive step toward the District’s overall goal of improving family engagement. District staff will attend the conference to learn more about applying the concept of “invitational schools” in practice, and rubrics are available through the national organization to measure progress. Superintendent Deane-Williams pointed out that the invitational schools model is also more closely aligned with the District’s goals and framework than the family friendly model. She explained that the family friendly model uses more of a behavioral approach, while the invitational schools model emphasizes relationships and relational capacity.

Commissioner Adams highlighted the importance of consistency in staff practices, noting that many different approaches and terms have been used in the past regarding school climate issues.

Superintendent Deane-Williams reported that key aspects of the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan will be accessible to the public online, including research related to each of the four pillars of the framework. She emphasized the importance of having an all-inclusive framework that applies to all schools in the District. The Superintendent explained that rubrics will be designed to align with these pillars and the corresponding strategies to evaluate staff implementation/practice. She described staff and schools being identified in the “Introductory/Entry” phase or a later phase, with more experienced staff coaching those in the earlier introductory phase for each of these pillars. Superintendent Deane-Williams asserted that the strategic framework is not optional, and will be incorporated into five days of training for administrators. She reported that the framework will also be embedded in training for

new teachers to ensure that they begin their work in the District with a certain level of awareness. The Superintendent declared that the goals described in the strategic framework are annual goals, with the pillars representing the foundation.

Ms. Alberti added that the framework is based on powerful learning and data-driven instruction, which has often been discussed but not well understood. She explained that data-driven instruction is not about the data, but about understanding each student and the specific supports that will help them advance.

Commissioner Powell questioned the extent to which past emphasis on data-driven instruction led to some resistance, since teachers could not necessarily see the relevance of the data in terms of behavioral issues and classroom management.

Superintendent Deane-Williams described the pillars of the strategic framework as being the “heart” of the model, while the values and theory of action are the “head” and the strategies and essential elements are the “hands” in carrying out the work needed to support each pillar. She highlighted the importance of beginning implementation with the “heart” because each person has to want to support each of the foundational aspects of the model for it to be effective. The Superintendent also discussed using the framework as a recruiting tool and in screening/interviewing candidates.

In terms of staffing support for implementing the model, the Superintendent explained that the fifth School Chief will collaborate with principals to build on pillars 1 and 4 (i.e. 1) Promoting the well-being of the whole child, whole school, and whole community; 4) cultivating understanding, collaboration, partnerships and advocacy for equity and justice for all). She noted that the Instructional Chiefs will build upon pillars 2 and 3 (i.e. 2) Ensuring powerful learning for every student; 3) building capacity to ensure comprehensive school improvement). Superintendent Deane-Williams reported that a grant has been awarded to support two Parent Advocates to work with an Instructional Chief to facilitate advocacy and implementation of these aspects of the framework. She stated that the District will focus on supporting principals to organize schools to attain each of the pillars, and school improvement plans will be designed to align with this framework.

Ms. Alberti noted that the School Comprehensive Education Plans will be presented to the Board toward the end of September this year. She suggested the possibility of developing school improvement plans earlier in the year in the future, and of preparing the District Improvement Plan in time for budget season to allow funding to be aligned with decision-making.

Commissioner Powell observed a major shift in the District’s approach to grant funding by pursuing opportunities that support the overall framework, rather than pursuing any funding available. Superintendent Deane-Williams responded that the grant issue persists because these funds are provided throughout the year and often go to schools for additional staffing and resources. During the 2017-18 budget process, school administrators were asked to consider grant funding anticipated for the upcoming year and to devise a cohesive way to serve the needs of students and families in their school. The Superintendent assured that positions identified in the budget that are pending grant approval will be filled. She noted that there has been some tendency to revert to past practices of requesting additional positions that have not been included in the budget, and her response has been that the additional staffing must be aligned with the strategic framework. Superintendent Deane-Williams gave an example of community schools, which need staff who are knowledgeable about social services, foster care, and the mental health system. She reported that efforts are being made to find

locations that will allow staff from community organizations to be brought into the District. She stated that having staff members from community organizations housed in RCSD buildings would facilitate their immediate involvement in serving students and their families.

Over the next few days, Ms. Alberti stated that the teams will share and exchange information at the Leadership Conference about other aspects of the strategic framework and the measures that may be used to assess the degree to which actual practice is supporting each of the pillars.

Commissioner Adams requested clarification regarding aligning the measures with each of the pillars and their applicability to the tenets in the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE). Ms. Alberti replied that the DTSDE tenets are woven into the strategic framework. She gave an example of the 1st pillar of promoting the well-being of the whole child, whole school and whole community corresponding primarily to Tenet 5 of the DTSDE (Student Social, Emotional and Developmental Health), so that the measures could be applied to the framework and to the DTSDE.

IV. Discuss Resolution to allow students from West Irondequoit School District to attend Edison High School and School No. 50 in 2017-18 (Resolution No. 2017-18: 78)

Ms. Alberti explained that this resolution reflects the continuation of the Socioeconomic Integration grant, which allowed five students from the West Irondequoit School District to attend School No. 50 in 2016-17. She stated that the grant includes School No. 12, School No. 50, and Edison High School. Ms. Alberti reported that the key component of the program at School No. 50 is to allow socioeconomic integration at the PreK level, and another five students from West Irondequoit are to be admitted in 2017-18. She stated that elementary teachers from West Irondequoit have been participating in professional development with PreK teachers at School No. 50 to promote understanding and consistency.

Commissioner White inquired about growth in socioeconomic integration in the PreK program at School No. 50. Ms. Alberti replied that the PreK program capacity of 50 students limits the number of West Irondequoit students that can be admitted, with a cap currently set at five students. She noted that District students cannot be displaced to provide space for students from other school districts.

Ms. Alberti reported that professional development between the West Irondequoit School District and the Rochester City School District has grown, and additional sessions are planned for staff at School No. 50, School No. 12, Edison High School and the larger community.

Commissioner Powell asked about the possibility of the West Irondequoit School District accepting RCSD students. Ms. Alberti responded that the West Irondequoit School District does not offer a PreK program. She stated that initial discussions included the possibility of expanding from PreK to Kindergarten, but the West Irondequoit District now offers a full-day Kindergarten program for students.

Commissioner Powell inquired about the extent to which families are choosing the PreK program at School No. 50, compared to PreK programs at other RCSD schools. She asked whether School No. 50 has additional capacity at the Kindergarten and 1st grade levels to enable a larger number of students from West Irondequoit to be admitted in these grades.

Action Item: Additional information about the capacity at School No. 50 in the PreK program, Kindergarten and 1st grade will be obtained and reported to the members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee.

Commissioner White asked about capacity and the number of West Irondequoit students anticipated to attend Edison High School in 2017-18. Ms. Alberti replied that at this point, two students from West Irondequoit are expected to attend Edison High School in the upcoming school year because they were attending the school before their families moved out of the District.

Commissioner White discussed the need to publicize these “reverse migration” situations in which suburban families are seeking RCSD schools and programs. Ms. Alberti responded that the socioeconomic integration grant will allow funds to be expended on a recruitment booklet for Edison High School.

Commissioner Hallmark inquired about transportation arrangements and costs for West Irondequoit students to attend RCSD schools. Ms. Alberti stated that the District provides transportation services for these students, but the costs are covered by the socioeconomic integration grant.

Commissioner Powell emphasized the importance of being able to expand socioeconomic integration beyond a small pilot project.

Commissioner White contended that the ability to expand the project depends on perceptions of success.

Commissioner Hallmark noted that the extent of socioeconomic integration is also linked to the District offering specific programs that are not available in suburban districts, such as PreK and Career & Technical Education.

Commissioner Powell asserted that the main question is whether the West Irondequoit students will remain in the Rochester City School District after completing the PreK program.

Commissioner Hallmark asked about the potential impact of West Irondequoit students wanting to remain in the District after completing PreK.

Action Item: Ms. Alberti will look into the possibility and implications of allowing students from West Irondequoit to choose to remain in the Rochester City School District after completing the PreK program at School No. 50. She will report her findings to the members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee.

Commissioner White pointed out that suburban integration programs must be tied to the most successful schools and programs in the District (e.g. School No. 58, School of the Arts, Edison High School).

Commissioner Adams acknowledged that offering opportunities to attend the most successful schools/programs may be the most useful marketing approach, but creates concerns about reducing the number of District students admitted in coveted schools to generate space for suburban students.

Commissioner Hallmark added that admitting suburban students to schools throughout the District would complicate transportation services and conflict with the neighborhood school model. She asserted that students from suburban districts should only be admitted to RCSD schools that are in close geographic proximity.

Commissioner White referred to numerous research studies demonstrating that increased socioeconomic integration leads to substantial improvements in student achievement. He contended that the District will continue to struggle without a significant degree of economic diversity in the student population.

Commissioner Hallmark recognized these research findings, but stated that her preference is to begin improvement efforts with teaching and learning.

Commissioner Adams discussed the potential impact of community control of schools in raising student achievement. She noted that a research base regarding community control of education does not exist because the efforts that have been made in impoverished black and brown communities have historically been met with backlash from unions. Commissioner Adams pointed out that the actions of the community had not been institutionalized for a long enough period of time to enable research studies to be conducted. She reported that there have been isolated examples of effective community-controlled schools, but not in sufficient numbers to form a foundation for research.

The Superintendent asserted that the socioeconomic diversity of the community must also be considered. She stated that healthy development and achievement are not supported by having children attend an economically diverse school and then return home to an impoverished neighborhood. She noted that there may be opportunities to study conditions in Rochester because of the possibility of designing multiple models and pathways for improving education for children.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve the above resolution allowing students from West Irondequoit to attend School No. 50 and Edison High School in 2017-18. Seconded by Commissioner Hallmark. **Adopted 3-0.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:03PM.