

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting
July 21, 2016

Attending: Malik Evans (Chair); Commissioners Elliott, Cruz (arrived 5:41PM), White (arrived 5:46PM), and Adams (arrived 5:53PM).

Parent Representative: Toyin Anderson

District Staff: Superintendent Linda Cimusz; Dr. Christiana Otuwa, Deputy Superintendent of Teaching & Learning; Michele Alberti, Executive Director of the Office of School Innovation; Laurel Avery-DeToy, Principal of Roberto Clemente School No. 8; Leah Kelly, Assistant Principal of Roberto Clemente School No. 8; Kirstin Pryor, Senior Research Analyst with the Office of School Innovation.

Board Staff: Debra Flanagan

Commissioner Evans called the meeting to order at 5:32PM.

I. Review Minutes of June 9, 2016 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Elliott to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2016 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting. **Adopted 2-0, with concurrence of the Parent Representative.**

II. Discuss Proposed Partnership Between Genesee Community Charter School and Roberto Clemente School No. 8

Establish a partnership between Genesee Community Charter School and RCSD Roberto Clemente School No. 8: Resolution No. 2016-17: 82

Laurel Avery-DeToy reported that she and the leadership team from Roberto Clemente School No. 8 just returned from an Expeditionary Learning training in Denver, which was also attended by administrators from the Genesee Community Charter School. She explained that the grant awarded to the charter school would focus on developing the K-2 literacy program at School No. 8, since many students are entering the school with substantial delays in language development. Ms. Avery-DeToy reported that Genesee Community Charter School has embraced School No. 8 as a mentoring school, and the collaboration will enable teachers to become better versed in the application of the expeditionary learning model. She discussed the proposed partnership as an exciting opportunity to use hands-on, sensory integration activities to better meet students' needs.

Commissioner Evans pointed out that the intent of charter schools was to serve as incubators for innovation, which could then be replicated in other public schools. He stated that the proposed partnership fulfills this original intent. Commissioner Evans inquired about staffing under the grant. Ms. Avery-DeToy replied that the grant includes 1.0FTE for a Teacher on Assignment who is a literacy specialist, and there would be no cost to the District. Leah Kelly explained that the literacy specialist will work six days per month with teachers at School No. 8 who will be piloting the expeditionary

learning literacy initiative. She noted that the literacy specialist will also work with teachers at Genesee Community Charter School as they pilot the K-2 literacy program, thereby linking the work at both schools to strengthen the partnership, share best practices, and build supports across schools. Ms. Avery De-Toy stated that she has consulted with Katie Yarlett, the RCSD Director of Reading By Third Grade, and with Brenna Farrell-Geise, ELA Director, to ensure that the instructional plan is solid and able to help students progress.

As liaison to the school, Commissioner Evans expressed the hope that School No. 8 will become as sought after by parents as School No. 58, which is also an expeditionary learning school. He noted that families and students residing in the NE zone could certainly benefit from having this type of school available.

Commissioner Elliott pointed out that duplicating a particular model (e.g. expeditionary learning) across schools does not necessarily lead to the same results. She asserted that a great deal depends on staff support and willingness to implement programs/initiatives with fidelity.

Commissioner Elliott asked about teachers' response to the proposed partnership and K-2 literacy initiative. Ms. Avery-DeToy replied that school staff have been quite supportive, although a few were exited through involuntary displacement. She stated that instructional leaders with considerable experience have been brought into School No. 8 this year, and every teacher has signed an Employee Work Agreement to agree to work with expeditionary learning practices.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the goals for the partnership with Genesee Community Charter School and for the K-2 literacy program. Ms. Avery-DeToy stated that the goal is to attain a 10% increase in ELA and Math metrics for School No. 8 as a result of this collaboration.

Commissioner Elliott asked about the time period for which the \$500K in grant funding has been provided. Ms. Avery-DeToy clarified that the \$500K grant is for a period of three years.

Superintendent Cimusz noted that School No. 8 is already committed to being an expeditionary learning site, and additional opportunities will be available under the proposed partnership for consultant work and professional development for teachers.

Commissioner Elliott asked whether the plans include developing internal capacity to enable RCSD staff to carry out the K-2 expeditionary learning literacy program in the future. Leah Kelly announced that a preliminary timeline has already been created for professional development and options are being explored for expanding the literacy initiative to grades K-8.

Motion by Commissioner Elliott to approve the above resolution regarding establishing a partnership between Genesee Community Charter School and Roberto Clemente School No. 8. **Adopted 2-0, with concurrence of the Parent Representative.**

III. Presentation regarding RCSD Improvement Plans

Dr. Otuwa provided an overview of efforts made to improve the planning process this year:

- Beginning the planning process earlier in the year, and monitoring progress toward specific improvement goals established for each school and for the District throughout the year.
- Training provided to all schools in the use of the rubric used to evaluate teachers' performance (i.e. Danielson rubric)
- Use of school-level data and evidence to inform District priorities, budget decisions, and performance goals
- Shifting the focus of improvement plans from compliance to a blueprint for substantive change

Dr. Otuwa discussed using the DTSDE results as a benchmark and aligning priorities, the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP), budget and grant funding, and School Comprehensive Education Plans (SCEPs) toward the same goals to promote the desired outcomes. Michele Alberti pointed out that the DTSDE review, survey, and other school data have been used in the past, but have not been integrated into the planning process. She stated that the data is now being utilized in a much more cohesive way to advance District priorities, allocation of resources, and development of the DCIP and SCEPs. Ms. Alberti emphasized the importance of consulting with stakeholders in the planning process, and presented a preliminary timeline for developing the DCIP in January to inform budget decisions. She noted that past practice has been to prepare the DCIP at the end of the school year, after the budget has already been adopted.

Ms. Alberti described efforts to involve all stakeholders in the review and planning process. A district-wide Executive School-Based Planning Team would be created, composed of the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendents, leadership of each of the collective bargaining units, and members of the Parent Advisory Council. She stated that separate teams will be established to address each of the six tenets in the DTSDE review process, with a representative from each team serving on the Executive School-Based Planning Team. Each of the six tenet teams would include school leaders, parents, students and community members, as well as representatives from each of the collective bargaining units.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the criteria for participating in each of these teams. Ms. Alberti replied that each team will need to determine a specific focus, and the collective bargaining units will identify the individuals best suited to contribute and participate on a team. She suggested that criteria could include length of tenure, subject area certification, and interest in serving. Ms. Alberti noted that an effective communications plan will be essential in promoting staff investment in the process.

Superintendent Cimusz suggested adopting the DTSDE tenets to replace elements of the Strategic Plan because the DTSDE tenets are the basis for the NYS Education Department evaluation of school and district performance, and will be continuously monitored by the teams. The six tenets are: 1) District Leadership & Capacity; 2) School Leader Practices and Decisions; 3) Curriculum Development and Support; 4) Teacher Practices and Decisions; 5) Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health; and 6) Family and Community Engagement.

Ms. Alberti presented a color-coded table (“Heat Map”) to reflect the performance of each RCSD school on each of the tenets in the DTSDE review this year.

Commissioner Elliott asked about the meaning of the color codes, pointing out that a legend is needed to interpret the table. Ms. Alberti explained the color-coding for each school, stating that the following colors were used to reflect the school's performance on each tenet:

Blue: Highly Effective (Stage 4)

Green: Effective (Stage 3)

Yellow: Developing (Stage 2)

Red: Ineffective (Stage 1)

Ms. Alberti reported that a cross-functional team examined the results of the DTSDE review for each school within one week of the review being conducted. She stated that the team developed an action plan to help each school implement the recommendations from the review. Ms. Alberti pointed out that the DTSDE reviews were initiated in October 2015 in an effort to address problems early in the school year. She stated that past practice has been to conduct DTSDE reviews separately from preparing School Comprehensive Education Plans (SCEP), and the data obtained from the school reviews was not necessarily incorporated into the plans. Ms. Alberti noted that current efforts are intended to emphasize the importance of utilizing the data obtained from the DTSDE reviews to inform development of the SCEP for each school.

Commissioner Elliott asked why there was such a gap in addressing the recommendations from the DTSDE review, and where accountability broke down. Dr. Otuwa acknowledged that the Administration had not been monitoring to ensure that schools were following through to address problems and implement recommendations.

Commissioner White observed that School Nos. 19, 28, and 50 are shown as "ineffective" across most of the tenets on the Heat Map. He stated that efforts have been made for a potential partnership between School No. 19 and SUNY Geneseo, and asked about efforts to make improvements in School Nos. 28 and 50. Dr. Otuwa responded that the District is currently in the process of preparing a School Improvement Grant (SIG) 7 for School No. 50, and exploring options for the school.

Commissioner White stated that the Heat Map seems to be useful in indicating where additional support is needed. Ms. Alberti pointed to the value of DTSDE recommendations, which are now being included in each school's Finish Line Report for review in Leadership Meetings by the Board, Superintendent, and school administration. She stated that the teams conducting the DTSDE reviews are highly trained by the State to examine specific indicators correlated with effective schools. She noted that the areas in red and yellow on the Heat Map reflect those in greatest need of improvement, and this data is essential in informing planning and decision-making.

Commissioner White noticed that the Heat Map indicates that Monroe High School is "developing" or "effective" on the DTSDE tenets. He asked how this is possible, since this school is considered by the NYS Education Department to be "persistently failing" and at risk for being placed under the control of an external receiver. Ms. Alberti clarified that the rating is based on the school having systems and structures in place over the last year to support student achievement and effective instruction, indicating that these elements are now in place in Monroe High School.

Commissioner White inquired whether Monroe High School was rated "ineffective" on these measures

at some point over the last several years. He questioned the value of the information on the Heat Map if serious deficiencies in school performance have not been identified over the last few years. Commissioner White added that the chart should have indicated “ineffective” for Charlotte High School, East High School, and School No. 9 over the last few years; otherwise, the Heat Map is not useful in predicting school performance. He asserted that the accuracy and predictive value of the Heat Map should have been evaluated before relying on it as a basis for decision-making, allocation of resources, and planning.

Action Item: Ms. Alberti will obtain information regarding the DTSDE ratings on each tenet for Monroe High School, Charlotte High School, East High School, and School No. 9 over the last few years to present to Board members (i.e. “Heat Map” findings)

Commissioner Elliott asked about the meaning of “No Review in the Pilot” on the Heat Map, again noting the importance of providing a legend to facilitate Board members’ understanding of the information. Ms. Alberti replied that “No Review” refers to schools in good standing, for which DTSDE reviews are not required by the NYS Education Department. She stated that the District is currently considering the types of reviews to conduct for these schools in 2016-17.

Dr. Otuwa discussed the results from the DTSDE surveys of students and school staff members, which were administered for the first time this year. She stated that the survey results reflect the perceptions of students and staff in the building, and are based on a scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”. Dr. Otuwa reported that 12 items were added to the survey regarding restorative practices to reflect the importance of this initiative.

Dr. Otuwa stated that school-specific reports were generated if at least a 40% response rate was obtained, and the survey data was used to prepare the school SCEP or School Improvement Grant (SIG) application. She reported a 33% response rate overall on the survey of students in grades 3-12, and a 49% response rate on the staff surveys. She pointed out that there was a great deal of variation among schools in the percent of students participating in the survey, with 23 schools having student response rates of 50% or greater and 20 schools with response rates below 10%.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the types of questions presented in the student survey. Ms. Alberti responded that the original student survey was presented to the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee late last year. She explained that students were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements, such as:

Grades 3-8:

- We work hard in my class.
- My class has a SmartBoard.
- We have time for music and art in my school.

Grades 9-12:

- A variety of texts and reading materials are used each day in most of my classes.
- My curriculum includes frequent writing tasks.
- My school has a variety of programs and courses from which I can choose.

Commissioner Elliott asked how the survey results were used. Ms. Alberti replied that the data was used in developing the SIG application or SCEP for the schools that had higher survey response rates (i.e. at least 40%). She stated that the survey data was provided to the School-Based Planning Team to guide development of the SCEP for the school and to identify the specific areas in need of greater attention.

Commissioner Elliott asked why the threshold for the survey response rate was not set lower to ensure that the information available from students was utilized. Ms. Alberti replied that the student survey data was examined and found to have a high degree of consistency with other data available for each school. She pointed out that none of the students completed the survey in some schools.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the factors affecting the low or non-existent response rates in some schools, and actions that can be taken to improve participation. Dr. Otuwa replied that this is the first time that the survey has been administered in the District, and teachers and principals were contacted to encourage participation by students and staff throughout the period that the survey was available. Ms. Alberti stated that it was anticipated that school staff might not receive the student survey favorably. She described working with collective bargaining units (RTA and ASAR) to clarify the way in which the survey data would be used and to gain their support. She explained that it was necessary to emphasize that the survey would not be used to evaluate individual teacher or principal performance, but as an instrument for growth and learning.

Toyin Anderson asked about follow-up measures taken with the schools that had a low percentage of students responding to the survey. Ms. Alberti reported that considerable discussion was held with administrators and staff at these schools regarding the value that survey data would have provided in preparing the SCEP or SIG grant application. She asserted that greater emphasis by the Administration regarding the value and importance of the survey data will lead to greater support at the school level.

Ms. Anderson referred to the impact of school culture and climate, emphasizing the importance of obtaining feedback from the students and staff in each building to be able to individualize improvement plans for each school.

Commissioner Cruz inquired about the amount of time during which students could take the survey. Ms. Alberti responded that the student survey was available for approximately four months, requiring 15-30 minutes to complete and had to be completed in one sitting. Kirstin Pryor explained that an increasing number of schools began organizing to complete the student surveys during the 4-month open period because they realized the potential benefit in informing their improvement efforts.

Commissioner Evans stated that he has had considerable experience with surveys, and the best way to maximize the response rate is to require the survey to be given to all students on the same day at the same time.

Commissioner Cruz asked about methods for capturing information from students who have a high rate of absenteeism to understand the factors affecting attendance and school engagement. He asserted that the District tends to focus on adults, and spends little time asking students about their school experience and the reasons for their attendance or disengagement. Ms. Alberti acknowledged that additional work is needed to explore options for reaching out to students who have not participated in the survey.

Dr. Otuwa reviewed the results of the staff survey, which indicate room for growth in the use of assessments, planning, and providing targeted supports for students. She reported that the findings also indicate that schools lack systems to address the needs of students and families proactively. Dr. Otuwa stated that these findings have been incorporated into the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP).

Dr. Otuwa reported that the data from the staff survey showed much more positive perceptions and experiences at the grade 3-8 level than for grades 9-12. She cautioned against drawing definitive conclusions from these findings because of the low response rate (49%).

Commissioner Cruz pointed out that an overall response rate of 49% is quite high, considering that the typical survey response rate is about 10-15%.

Commissioner Elliott stated that the response rate cannot be compared with other types of surveys because students and staff are a captive audience.

Commissioner Evans added that administering the survey in the school environment may lead students and staff to answer differently than if conducted in a more neutral setting with a greater degree of anonymity.

Ms. Pryor reported that the confidence interval for the survey responses is quite high and that there is a high level of consistency with other available school-based data. She added that multiple sources of data are needed to obtain a more complete perspective.

Consistent with the staff survey results, findings from the student surveys show that students in grades 3-8 view school in a more positive light than their peers in grades 9-12. Below are the specific areas in need of improvement, based on the responses of students in grades 9-12:

- Instruction:
 - » Students' lack of interest in their classes and course material (70%)
 - » Students' difficulty in understanding the material being presented (51%)
 - » Students' limited opportunities to work in groups (57%) or to discuss topics in class (54%)

- School climate:
 - » Students not following rules (66%)
 - » Behavioral issues interfering with learning (66%)
 - » School's ineffectiveness in addressing bullying (57%)
 - » Students lack a sense of safety (43%) or feeling welcomed in school (47%)

Dr. Otuwa remarked that the high degree of consistency between staff and students' responses reflects the need for significant improvements in RCSD secondary schools, specifically in providing a culturally responsive curriculum, implementing restorative practices, and offering social and emotional supports.

Ms. Alberti discussed the process for developing the SCEP plans for each school. In 2015-16, each

school was asked to monitor their progress based on a tool provided by the State regarding implementation of SCEP plans. Ms. Alberti explained that schools were asked to examine each goal in the SCEP plan to indicate whether the goal was being met, and identify actions that could be taken to attain unmet goals. She reported that schools were asked to engage in this process early in the year during the DTSDE review and in the middle of the year. Ms. Alberti stated that a presentation was developed in consultation with the Parent Advisory Council to explain to School-Based Planning Teams the process of developing the SCEP plan based on progress monitoring. She discussed collaborating with School Chiefs to assist individual School-Based Planning Teams to prepare the SCEP for their school, noting that each of the SCEP plans have been submitted to Board members for review for approval in this month's Business Meeting.

Dr. Otuwa reviewed the highlights of the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP):

Tenet 1 Goals: Align supports to strengthen school climate, enhance data-driven instruction and intervention.

- Reduce chronic absences by 2.5% in elementary schools and 3.0% in secondary schools;
- Reduce the RCSD suspension rate by 10%;
- Raise the 4-Year graduation rate by 3% for identified student subgroups, and by:
 - » 8-10% for schools that currently have a 30-50% graduation rate
 - » 5-8% for schools with a 51-70% graduation rate
 - » 3-5% for schools with a 70-95% graduation rate

For grades 3-8:

- Increase the number of students scoring at Level 2 and above by 6% on both the NYS ELA and Math assessments;
- Increase the number of students scoring Proficient (i.e. Level 3 and 4) by 4% on both the NYS ELA and Math exams;
- Increase the number of students meeting or exceeding NWEA growth projections by 10%;
- Increase the number of students meeting or exceeding the NWEA norm by 10%

Ms. Alberti noted that there will be a greater focus on students who have scored at a Level 1 on NYS standardized assessments than in the past. She explained that often there haven't been plans for supporting or effectively intervening with these students, who have tended to remain at Level 1. Ms. Alberti pointed out that raising the achievement levels of these students will increase the performance index for the entire school, increasing their ability to make annual progress as measured by the NYS Education Department.

Commissioner Adams observed that the tendency to focus greater attention, time, and effort on specific groups of students based on their test scores (e.g. those scoring on the lower end of Level 2) is a consequence of a perverse system that overemphasizes testing. She stated that quality instruction is individualized according to students' needs – not on their test scores. Commissioner Adams reported that Reading Teachers have been explicitly disallowed from intervening with higher needs students to focus on boosting achievement of those testing in the mid-range.

Chris Suriano concurred, pointing out that federal regulations prohibit using funding under the

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to intervene with high-needs students to prevent them from being referred to Special Education.

Dr. Otuwa discussed graduation rates and the need for increased attention on student subgroups.

Commissioner White inquired how the targeted graduation rates are to be achieved in 2016-17. Dr. Otuwa replied that an audit of transcripts has been conducted in students' senior year to identify credits, Regents exams and other requirements needed for graduation. She stated that this process will now be conducted on a regular basis from the time a student enters 9th grade to provide opportunities for early intervention and to enable students to have time to fulfill necessary requirements. Dr. Otuwa announced that action plans have been developed for each school, and progress toward specified goals will be monitored on an ongoing basis. She noted that 12th grade students' attendance in summer school is currently being monitored and instruction time has been lengthened in summer programs this year.

Commissioner Elliott pointed out that summer school programs are costly and the District cannot necessarily depend on funding from the State to support these programs in the future. She stated that additional work is needed to evaluate the efficacy of summer school programs.

Tenet 2 Goals: Support school leader practices and decisions to increase student achievement.

- All Stage 1 schools will advance to Stage 2 in 2016-17
- 35% of Stage 2 schools will maintain or improve their status
- The District's composite rating will advance to Stage 2 in 2016-17

Tenet 3 Goals:

1. 75% of priority schools will implement the "plan-teach-assess-reflect" cycle in lesson plans by the 3rd quarter of 2017. Dr. Otuwa reported that the RCSD Professional Development plan focuses on this process.
2. By June 2017, the District will provide resources to pilot, review and evaluate a literacy development curriculum in five priority or receivership schools, with the intent of implementing the curriculum in all schools in 2017-18.

Tenet 4 Goals:

1. By the end of June 2017, 80% of K-6 and K-8 school leaders will have a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework in place with mandatory professional development to enable staff to provide appropriate Tier II and/or III services to meet the needs of all students identified through the RTI process.
2. By May 2017, at least 50% of schools and 80% of the teachers within the school will administer the full series of Common Formative Assessments in Math and ELA for grades 3-9.
3. By June 2017, 500 teachers in Phase I Digital Transformation schools will complete the

Google Ready series of four classes, and 250 teachers will complete the Google SET content courses.

Tenet 5 Goals: Strengthen school climate by developing a social-emotional framework, including:

- Restorative practices: Dr. Otuwa reported that restorative practices will be used in 3 additional schools in 2016-17, bringing the total to 10 schools.
- Implementation of revised Code of Conduct: currently in process
- Help Zones: currently in K-8 and high schools
- Culturally Relevant curriculum: Dr. Otuwa discussed implementing a course entitled, “Knowing Our Students: Their Culture, Heritage and Realities” based on the Relationship Model developed by Dr. DeGruy. She stated that efforts are being made to ensure that cultural relevance is embedded in all aspects of the curriculum.

Tenet 6: Family and Community Engagement, which consists of three major goals:

1. Improving parents’ experience;
2. Implementing the Relationship Model of educational intervention;
3. Launching community schools

Ms. Alberti discussed plans to strengthen and support the role of Parent Liaisons, and to promote a customer service focus in Central Office and schools to improve parents’ interactions with the District. She stated that the District will collaborate with the Rochester Community Learning Institute to implement Dr. DeGruy’s Relationship Model, beginning with a pilot in three schools in 2016-17 (School Nos. 5, 39, and the School Without Walls). Ms. Alberti reported that the District will establish four community schools in 2016-17 to serve as a hub for a wide range of services and supports for families and community members (School Nos. 9, 17, 22 and 45).

Commissioner Cruz commended the plans developed by staff, but noted that a champion is needed in each school to ensure that the plans are implemented with fidelity and sustained over time. He contended that the plans cannot be effective without support and leadership at the school level. Commissioner Cruz suggested considering the following crucial questions:

- Are problems being identified early enough in the school year to allow for effective intervention?
- How is leadership developed at the school level?
- How can leaders be most strategically placed in the District?
- How can school leaders be utilized effectively as mentors throughout the District?
- How can improvements be made in holding school administrators and staff accountable for failing to follow through (particularly in light of the low survey response rate of students and staff)?

Superintendent Cimusz reported that a Leadership Summit will be held for all school leaders from August 15-19, 2016. She discussed the importance of offering opportunities for school leaders to share best practices with their colleagues, particularly practices that advance district-wide goals. She also invited Board members to attend the Leadership Summit to discuss District goals and priorities.

IV. New Business

Commissioner White commented on the importance of partnerships to aid in raising student achievement in the District. He reported that a letter of intent was recently received from the President of SUNY Geneseo to partner with Dr. Charles T. Lunsford School No. 19, and this proposed collaboration has been included in the School Improvement Grant (SIG) application.

Meeting adjourned at 6:55PM.