

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting of the Whole
November 14, 2017

Attending: Commissioner Evans (Chair); and Commissioners White, Hallmark, Powell and Elliott

Parent Representative: Toyin Anderson

District Staff: Karl Kristoff, General Counsel; Anissa Henry-Wheeler, Auditor General

Community Members: Jackie Campbell, ROC The Future; Natalie Sheppard (Board Member Elect)

Board Staff: Shanai Lee, Board Clerk; Kallia Wade, Executive Assistant to the Board

Commissioner Evans called the meeting to order at 5:34PM.

I. Presentation regarding ROC The Future

Commissioner Evans introduced Jackie Campbell from ROC The Future, a community collaborative that has been very involved in supporting educational efforts in the District and the larger community. He stated that he invited Ms. Campbell this evening to provide an overview of the work performed by ROC The Future.

Ms. Campbell handed out the 2016-17 Report Card, explaining that ROC The Future is a community-wide alliance whose mission is to ensure that all children receive the support they need from cradle to career.

Ms. Campbell identified the following six community-wide outcomes related to supporting children from cradle to career. She added that specific benchmarks have been developed to evaluate progress toward each of these outcomes:

- Kindergarten readiness
- Early grade literacy
- Middle grade math proficiency
- High school graduation
- Post-secondary enrollment
- Post-secondary completion

Ms. Campbell explained that the ROC The Future alliance is comprised of over 100 participating organizations, and utilizes the Cincinnati STRIVE Together model. This model uses collective impact to improve outcomes for children. Ms. Campbell referred to a chart of the percentage of students attaining each outcome, noting that performance has improved on five of the six outcomes since the baseline year.

Ms. Campbell described the principles underlying collective impact:

- Shared goals
- Agreement about the measures to be used to evaluate progress toward goals
- Mutually reinforcing activities in which participating organizations' actions are aligned and coordinated
- Continuous communication among partners and with the community
- Designation of a particular organization to support the work of continuous improvement (e.g. The Children's Agenda supports the work of ROC The Future)

Ms. Campbell pointed out that collective impact differs from collaboration because each participating organization in the alliance makes internal changes necessary to support the goals and work of ROC The Future. She recalled that former SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher came from Cincinnati to implement the STRIVE Together model in New York. Ms. Zimpher traveled to different communities to discuss this model, and Monroe Community College (MCC) took up the charge in Rochester. In 2013, ROC The Future moved from MCC to The Children's Agenda.

Ms. Campbell explained that the alliance identifies the work being performed by each participating organization to avoid duplicating efforts and to sustain effective efforts. She described the formation of workgroups with ROC The Future from existing initiatives in the community:

- The Early Childhood Development initiative became the first workgroup with the alliance, and supports the goal of school readiness.
- The Greater Rochester AfterSchool Alliance comprised the second workgroup, and has focused on expanding learning opportunities for children outside of the school day.
- The College Access Network was already involved in supporting students who wanted to attend college. This organization formed the 3rd workgroup with ROC The Future to promote post-secondary enrollment and completion.

Currently, ROC The Future has a total of six workgroups promoting each of the six outcomes to improve conditions for children in Rochester.

Ms. Campbell reported that ROC The Future has witnessed some progress toward the desired outcomes, but there is considerable room for improvement. She stated that the alliance has undergone some self-examination in the last year to determine whether their work is sufficient to effect necessary improvements. This analysis indicated that the work of ROC The Future has not been sufficiently aligned with the STRIVE Together model. By reviewing the actual use of time, energy, and resources, the members of ROC The Future found that most of their efforts were expended in promoting school readiness and early childhood education, and had not sufficiently focused on the goal of increasing students' reading proficiency by third grade. Ms. Campbell pointed out that only 8.2% of RCSD third-grade students were considered proficient in reading last year.

This self-examination also led to the discovery that ROC The Future had not been using data to identify opportunities for improvement, but simply to report on current status. The leadership of the alliance has since examined each of the desired outcomes in greater detail to identify barriers toward progress and opportunities for improvement. As a result of this process, the following priorities have been identified:

1. Early grade literacy
2. Continued support for promoting school readiness
3. High school graduation

Ms. Campbell noted that the participating members of ROC The Future demonstrate their commitment toward these goals by establishing specific targets. As an example, she stated that the alliance has determined that by 2020, 80% of four-year-old children in Rochester will be ready for school. In 2016, 57% of four-year-old children were found to be ready for school.

The most recent collective action by ROC The Future focuses on parent engagement, and was initiated in 2015 through efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism among PreK students. The intent was to establish expectations and engage parents and children early in their educational experience. Attendance was monitored in Headstart programs at Ibero American Action League and Action for a Better Community. Each site conducted a parent orientation, which included sharing data with parents about the impact of absenteeism on learning and early childhood education. Ms. Campbell explained that some parents have the impression that PreK is similar to day care, so their child's absence will not be of much consequence. The data shared with parents reflects the impact of absenteeism on the individual child and the entire classroom. As part of the orientation, parents were asked to sign a covenant in which they agreed to take specific actions if absence becomes an issue. Family Service Advocates also signed the covenant, agreeing to maintain communication with the family.

Commissioner Hallmark asked about the leverage that has been used by ROC The Future to get parents and staff to make these commitments. Ms. Campbell replied that the covenant is based on the assumption that parents want to support their child's education and well-being, and that providing the necessary tools and information will lead them to make different choices. She stated that the "leverage" consists of the relationships between parents/families and the members of the ROC The Future alliance.

Referring to a chart of PreK attendance at each of the sites studied, Ms. Campbell pointed out that there was a 15% increase in attendance at the North Street site from 2015-16 to 2016-17. Overall, attendance increased an average of 3% at all PreK sites during this time period. She stated that sharing this data with members of the alliance encourages further exploration of the factors and practices at the North Street site that led to greater improvement in attendance than at other sites.

Commissioner Hallmark inquired whether ROC The Future is examining the factors that led to the success at the North Street site. Ms. Campbell responded that the alliance is conducting more detailed examination this year, noting that attendance data is reviewed and shared with participating organizations on a monthly basis to identify contributing factors. She stated that the staff at each site are participating in focus groups, and Headstart is also providing additional professional development for staff members. Ms. Campbell reported that she recently reviewed the data for the last two months, which revealed that two PreK sites are improving so far this year. She pointed out that one of these sites has quite a few new staff members who are more engaged in the program and with the children.

Ms. Campbell explained that the continuous improvement process encourages participating organizations to adopt changes in their practices to advance goals to improve outcomes for children. She noted that continuous improvement efforts are apparent in these Headstart programs, specifically through enhancing staff development, understanding and application of data.

Commissioner Hallmark asked about the way in which the professional development offered in the Headstart programs is coordinated with staff development in District PreK programs. Ms. Campbell described collaborating with Amy Schiavi, RCSD Chief of School Leadership, to examine ways in which ROC The Future members partner with the District and with other early education providers in the community for professional development.

Ms. Campbell emphasized the importance of examining and promoting relationships at every level: among staff members, with parents and students, and among the partners in the alliance. She pointed out that the District's relationship model is being utilized by the participating organizations in ROC The Future.

The next steps for the ROC The Future alliance:

- Strengthen partnerships;
- Increase the amount of time, energy and resources dedicated to early literacy and high school graduation;
- Use data to identify opportunities for improvement; and
- Continue to engage parents in the community

Commissioner Evans inquired about the actions or opportunities identified by the STRIVE Together organization or in other communities to help children prepare to enter school. He asserted that there is little awareness or appreciation for the basic elements needed to help a child get ready to begin school, such as acquiring a certain number of vocabulary words by a specific age. Ms. Campbell responded that there are many efforts under way to promote school readiness, and the ROC The Future School Readiness Workgroup is identifying challenges affecting children even before entry into PreK. She also discussed the GROW project, which offers early screening to diagnose barriers to child development and provides referrals for early intervention and remediation. Ms. Campbell emphasized the importance of these diagnostic tools, noting that parents cannot address their child's challenges if they do not have information. She added that communities throughout the country have recognized the need for improvement in parent engagement. Ms. Campbell reported that ROC The Future is currently exploring ways to measure parent engagement, and to improve parents' access to needed supports and services.

II. Review and Discuss Plans for School No. 41

Mr. Kristoff discussed the legal requirements, options, and timeline for developing plans for School No. 41. Since the NYS Education Department determined that this school did not make "demonstrable improvement" in 2016-17, the District has the following options:

1. Identify an independent receiver to manage the school;
2. Close the school; or
3. Close the school and open a substantially different school.

Mr. Kristoff explained that the District has to make a decision within 60 days from the date that the NYS Education Commissioner invokes the receivership statute. He noted that there is some uncertainty about the precise deadline because the NYS Education Commissioner informed the Superintendent of the final determination regarding School No. 41 in a letter dated October 26, 2017,

but this letter was embargoed. The embargo prohibited the Superintendent from releasing information about School No. 41 to the Board, staff, parents, students, or the public until the NYS Education Department (NYSED) notified the public. A press release was issued by NYSED on October 31, 2017.

Mr. Kristoff pointed out that the deadline based on the October 26th letter would be December 1, 2017, but the deadline based on public notification would be December 5, 2017. He reported that he has requested officials at NYSED to reconsider the deadline because the decision-makers (Board of Education) were not notified of the status of School No. 41 until October 31, 2017. Mr. Kristoff stated that he is still waiting to receive their response to his request.

Mr. Kristoff also noted that the Board has the option to nominate an individual or entity to serve as an independent receiver, even if they are not included in the list of qualified receivers approved by NYSED. He explained that this option would involve submitting the qualifications of the nominee to the NYS Education Commissioner within 40 days. If the nominee is approved by the NYS Education Commissioner, the Board would have 60 days to make the appointment as independent receiver for School No. 41.

Commissioner Powell asked about the individuals or organizations on the list of qualified receivers approved by NYSED. Mr. Kristoff replied that he has conducted a number of searches and has not been able to find this list. He added that the NYS Education Commissioner has been granted so much discretion with respect to independent receivership that individuals and organizations could be placed on the official approved list at any time.

Commissioner Powell contended that the lack of information about individuals/organizations on the approved receiver list and the uncertainty regarding the deadline for making a decision underscore the basic issue of not having sufficient information available when required to make critical decisions. Mr. Kristoff responded that the situation could very well be considered in this way. He pointed out that this process has never been undertaken, and he is providing his best estimate in an effort to provide some guidance to his colleagues.

Commissioner White reported asking the Board Clerk to send a letter to the NYS Deputy Commissioner of Education over a week ago to ask for the names of the individuals/organizations on the list of approved receivers, and a response has not yet been received.

Commissioner Hallmark thanked Board President White for taking initiative to establish a record, noting that the repeated references to “NYS Education Commissioner’s approved list” imply that such a list exists. She questioned how a deadline can be imposed for making decisions about School No. 41 if information about the approved receivers is not shared with the decision-makers.

Mr. Kristoff discussed the option of closing School No. 41, pointing out that this option is always available to the Board of Education. He stated that certain rules will have to be followed to pursue this option, including the Board’s policy, *Closure of School Buildings* (7600). Mr. Kristoff discussed two major issues involved in closing the school:

1. Placement of the students who have been attending School No. 41 in other District schools; and
2. Use of the building currently housing School No. 41

Mr. Kristoff added that another option is to close School No. 41 and open a new school. He reported that the regulations for opening a new school under these circumstances are very strict in terms of creating a substantially different school. The plans for a new school would be subject to approval by the NYS Education Commissioner and the Board of Regents.

Commissioner Hallmark inquired about a set of rubrics/criteria required to be considered a substantially “new” school. Mr. Kristoff replied that the criteria are essentially those applicable to issuing a new BEDS code, which are contained in NYS regulations. He stated that there are no metrics available to independently determine what would constitute a “new” school in this situation, and it is subject to the discretion of the NYS Education Commissioner. Mr. Kristoff surmised that the NYS legislature and Board of Regents seem to have decided that once a school reaches the point of being placed under independent receivership, it will be subject to the State’s discretion in driving the process and the decisions.

Commissioner Hallmark pointed out that this approach leaves the Board and the District with no information in terms of the implications of the available options to enable a decision to be made. Mr. Kristoff emphasized that the critical point in this process is that the Board and the District will not get a second chance. He stated that if the choice of receiver is not approved, the NYS Education Commissioner will decide who to appoint as an independent receiver.

Commissioner White observed that it is commonly assumed that there is local control of education, but this is not the case. He noted that the State controls the District because the Board of Education is considered an arm of the State. Mr. Kristoff concurred, pointing out that school districts in New York are delegated authority from the State under the law.

Commissioner White emphasized the need to focus on relationships with the NYS Education Commissioner and her colleagues to prevent decisions/actions from being made arbitrarily. He underscored the importance of collaborating with state officials to develop the proposal for School No. 41, whether to nominate an independent receiver or to create a new school.

Commissioner Adams pointed out that the option of closing School No. 41 and opening a “new” school is relatively recent and was not included in the federal turnaround regulations or the NYS receivership law enacted two years ago. She asked for additional background information regarding this option. To the best of his knowledge, Mr. Kristoff replied that no guidelines or criteria have been given for closing and opening a new school. He reported that guidelines have been established for closing schools, but not for determining what constitutes a new school.

Commissioner Adams stated that the Board has to insist on being provided with the criteria regarding the elements required to constitute a “new” school to enable local school district officials to develop plans in collaboration with the state.

Commissioner Elliott suggested that the absence of information from the state may offer an opportunity for the District to develop its own criteria based on the needs of students. Mr. Kristoff concurred that this is an opportunity for the District, except that the plans for the “new” school have to be approved by the state. He added that regulations require the application for a new BEDS code for a “new” school be submitted by March 1st, which is a very short timeframe for opening a completely new school as of June 1st.

Mr. Kristoff presented a proposed timeline for developing the plan for School No. 41 to submit to the Board and to the state. He also discussed the data that has been requested by NYSED, which is due by November 17th. Mr. Kristoff described the plan for analyzing the data to indicate the advantages and disadvantages of each option. He stated that the results of the analysis will be presented to the Superintendent on November 27th and to the Board by November 30th (or by December 5th, if the longer timeframe is allowed by NYSED). Mr. Kristoff clarified that the Board will have to choose an option for School No. 41 by the deadline, but implementation is not required at that point.

Commissioner Adams recalled that there was discussion and dialog with the NYS Education Department regarding East High School, and additional time was allowed for planning. She stated that the Board should insist on the same conditions in developing plans for School No. 41. She concurred with Commissioner Elliott about the necessity for the Board to point out the impossibilities being presented, while also developing highly informed, high-quality plans through dialog with the state. Commissioner Adams urged her colleagues to adopt this approach, particularly if the option chosen is to select their own independent receiver. She noted that the Board will need time to hear presentations from candidates for receivership, consider their ideas and plans for the school, and evaluate proposals. She contended that if this process cannot be carried out, there is no way that the plan for the school can be successful.

Commissioner Powell noted that the Administration will be examining each of the options between now and the deadline for responding to the state. She pointed out that selecting an independent receiver will cease to be an option if the state chooses to be rigid about the timeline. Commissioner Powell observed that only two options are available if the state's decision regarding an independent receiver is not acceptable to the District: 1) close the school altogether; or 2) close the school and open a "new" school.

Mr. Kristoff noted that the District's failure to comply with specified timelines increases the risk of the NYS Education Commissioner using her authority to appoint a receiver for the school.

Commissioner Powell contended that without an extension or a list of approved receivers by the time the analysis of the options are presented to the Board, the Board can respond that the only remaining viable options are to close the school altogether, or to close it and open a "new" school. She pointed out that this approach would deny the NYS Education Commissioner the remaining 20 days to appoint a receiver. Commissioner Powell declared that the Board still has choices in their response under these circumstances.

Toyin Anderson observed that the extremely tight deadlines create a situation in which almost no options are viable. She emphasized the importance of allowing the District the opportunity to make the best *informed* decision for students and families, and not forcing the choice of options because of time constraints. Ms. Anderson pointed out that information and knowledge are critical in enabling the District to make a decision that is in the best interests of the children served in the school, staff, and the entire school community – particularly since each option affects so many different areas of the school system. She emphasized that parents do not want a decision to be forced because of deadlines, and they need to know that the final decision has been reached after thoughtful deliberation and consideration of the implications.

Commissioner Elliott commented that the state considers the District to have had time to make

improvements to School No. 41, since it was placed under the Superintendent's receivership two years ago. She suggested that it could reasonably be argued that the school and District now have new leadership and staffing to better effect the necessary improvements.

Ms. Anderson stated that she understands the situation, but if the District was not able to address issues at the school within the last two years under the Superintendent's receivership, how is a choice to be made among these options within such a truncated timeframe? She questioned how plans are to be developed that will be successful in the future.

Commissioner Adams discussed the criteria that are important to parents and to the community: stability and continuity, continuous improvement, and improvement in school climate. She contended that a compelling argument can be made by the District identifying specific areas with insufficient support and parental and community concern for stability, support, and continuity. Commissioner Adams pointed out that a similar approach was used in advocating for the educational partnership for East High School.

Commissioner White expressed concern that the Superintendent and her team have already made the best possible argument regarding efforts and progress made at School No. 41 over the last year. He stated that this argument can still be made, but the District cannot count on it being effective. Commissioner White asserted that the District has to operate within the designated timeframe because of the absolute control that the state has over local schools in New York. He pointed out that the Board and the District are simply agents of the state under the New York State constitution. Commissioner White emphasized the need to focus on relationships with state officials to try to obtain extensions to the timeframe and to understand the state's needs regarding each of the options presented.

Mr. Kristoff focused on the data and information needed to make a decision regarding School No. 41. He highlighted the following elements that have been identified by the Administration, and requested input from Board members:

1. Current enrollment at School No. 41:
 - a. Number of students
 - b. Grade configurations
 - c. Percentage of students attending the school from the neighborhood
 - d. Number and percentage of students with disabilities
 - e. Number and percentage of students who are English-language learners

Consider where these students will attend school if School No. 41 is closed or reconstituted.

2. Teachers and Non-Instructional Staff:
 - a. Experience
 - b. Length of service at the school and within the District
 - c. Special negotiations to be addressed to facilitate an effective transfer process
 - d. The best way to manage staff issues in this situation through discussions with collective bargaining units

3. Financial implications:

a. Cost of an independent receiver:

Mr. Kristoff reported that requiring the District to bear the cost of an independent receiver would be problematic because the state would have to identify a line in the District budget that would be sufficient to support the receiver. He explained that if a budget line is used to support a receiver that already supports another administrative position, the independent receiver would have to assume the duties of that position also before the District could be charged.

b. Cost of a new model (i.e. reconstituting the school):

- i. New curriculum
- ii. New leadership
- iii. New staffing
- iv. Facility renovations needed to support the new program
- v. Length of school day and year
- vi. Availability of grant funds

4. Impact on transportation:

Although a transportation study is currently being conducted, a change in one location affects the entire system.

a. Impact on bus routes

b. Changes in transportation patterns with students from School No. 41 attending other RCSD schools (if School No. 41 is closed)

5. School Closure Policy (7600):

Mr. Kristoff stated that the requirements contained in this policy can be waived in this situation.

6. Capacity considerations

7. Accountability considerations:

a. How will the success of a new school be measured?

b. How will the success of each option be evaluated? (except for the option of appointing an independent receiver because they do not work for the District)

Commissioner Powell pointed out that the Superintendent's work on the Path Forward will be affected by the decision regarding School No. 41 because a great deal of this work involves building and zone capacity. She observed that the impact of each option on the future capacity of RCSD schools and zones will need to be examined, particularly in absorbing students from School No. 41. She noted that the District has a number of models for a new school based on highly chosen school programs: School No. 15, expeditionary learning, and Montessori. Commissioner Powell stated that all of these programs have a common limitation in that the teaching staff have training very specific to the model used in the school. She observed that replicating these models is problematic because of the difficulty in finding enough teachers with the training specific to the model. She pointed out replicating one of these models would involve removing teachers from successful schools to staff the new school.

Superintendent Deane-Williams emphasized the importance of thoroughly studying each option to understand and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages. She declared that any decision regarding School No. 41 will have ripple effects throughout the District. The Superintendent discussed opportunities to learn from school districts across the country that have had to create schools that would be acceptable to the state, either through receivership or a new school model. She pointed out that a number of staff in the District have had training in turnaround models and have worked in locations with these experiences. Superintendent Deane-Williams emphasized that the final decision must be made with a keen awareness of local conditions, strengths and accomplishments, and this situation must be viewed as an opportunity to renew the commitment to serving each and every child in the District. She concurred with Commissioner Elliott that the District has an opportunity to create a model that is acceptable to the state, if actions are undertaken rapidly, strategically and skillfully. She added that longer school days and/or years will be required, with up to 20-25 days of professional development for school staff over the summer to support the significant changes that are needed.

Commissioner Adams responded to Commissioner Powell's comments about possible models for a new school. She contended that parents want high quality neighborhood community schools, which is the approach that has been pursued at School No. 41. She stated that a majority of RCSD families want a high quality neighborhood school, rather than a highly specialized magnet school. Commissioner Adams noted that all of the rhetoric regarding receivership ultimately leads to creation of a community school, with the state's emphasis on services to support students and families and address their needs. She asserted that pursuing this path will serve students and families, while also satisfying the state's requirements.

Commissioner Adams pointed out that building a neighborhood community school will also address capacity needs in the Northwest zone. She recalled that a father presented data regarding seat capacity in the Northwest zone in a meeting in which the Board was discussing plans for School No. 15 and School No. 1. Commissioner Adams asserted that a neighborhood community school would be consistent with meeting identified capacity needs for the Northwest zone and with planning documents and analysis from the Facilities Modernization Plan. She stated that she wants to point out factors and considerations that dovetail to indicate a direction that would be effective.

Commissioner Adams also requested the most current and detailed reports available from the state to assist the Board in reaching a decision regarding School No. 41.

Commissioner Powell requested data regarding the zones in which the students attending School No. 41 reside. She stated that to the extent that students are attending this school from outside the neighborhood, establishing a requirement that the "new" school draw from the surrounding neighborhood could reduce transportation services and costs. Reducing transportation costs would enable the District to utilize the additional funds to cover some of the other costs associated with opening a new school.

Commissioner Evans commented on the difficulties and disruption caused from closing a school in the District. He noted that School No. 41 has a major program for students with autism, who are especially affected by changes in their environment and routine. Commissioner Evans emphasized the importance of considering the impact on these vulnerable students and provision of the services that they need. He explained that he asked the Auditor General to examine and discuss the implications of closing School No. 41 altogether and turning the building over to the City of Rochester.

Anissa Henry-Wheeler referred to a document regarding capacity in the NW zone and in city-wide schools, to which students from School No. 41 would be eligible to apply. She reported that comparison of current enrollment at School No. 41 to capacity in the NW zone shows that the schools in this zone cannot absorb the students from School No. 41. Ms. Henry-Wheeler also pointed out that there isn't sufficient seat capacity across the City to accommodate all of the levels and grades that exist at School No. 41. She acknowledged that these conclusions are based on a rather simplistic analysis, which did not involve examining the demographics and residential locations for all of the students currently attending School No. 41. The analysis was based on current enrollment and grade configuration at the school and current seats available in other schools in the NW zone and city-wide schools.

Ms. Henry-Wheeler discussed District capacity and the specialized program at School No. 41 for students with autism. She reported that seats in small, self-contained classrooms for students with autism are not available in other RCSD schools, which also lack the continuum of services that have been provided to these students. Ms. Henry-Wheeler noted that closing School No. 41 will create significant challenges in serving students with autism, and the District already has significant issues regarding special education.

Ms. Henry-Wheeler pointed to a number of other factors that need to be considered, such as:

- Class size (22 students per class for K-3; 26 students per class for grades 4-6)
- Existing zone boundaries: Possible changes to zone boundaries, since the other elementary schools in the NW zone do not have the capacity to absorb the students from School No. 41.
- Needs of students with autism: Since this is such a vulnerable population and the specialized program at School No. 41 cannot be replaced by reassigning these students to other schools throughout the District. Placement of these students must be carefully considered to ensure provision of a similar continuum of services and quality of care.
- Difficulty in determining the specific locations and services to be provided to students with disabilities: The District enrolls students on a daily basis and programs for students with disabilities are subject to frequent changes, which creates a great deal of uncertainty in estimating seat capacity with any degree of precision.
- Addressing additional seat or room capacity in the District: While additional seat capacity exists at certain grade levels (e.g. grades 4-6), fewer than five schools have entire classrooms at these grade levels that could be eliminated. Few schools have a seat capacity exceeding the standard of 26 students per class. Instead, capacity issues are sprinkled across many schools, which further complicates the analysis of seat availability.

In addition, consideration must be given to identifying school buildings that have additional rooms that could be used for classrooms. Information is needed about opportunities to create additional classrooms to make decisions about placing students from School No. 41.

Ms. Henry-Wheeler expressed the hope that the long-range planning being done under the Path Forward initiative will address these issues and prevent the District from having an excess seat capacity of 300 for grades 4-6.

Commissioner Powell observed that capacity has been an issue over the years. When the Parent Preference/Managed Choice policy was developed, a careful study was performed specifically regarding facilities capacity. Over time, sections were closed in schools to ensure that the number of teaching staff were aligned with the number of students enrolled in each grade level. Commissioner Powell explained that closing sections led to increased room availability, while overall capacity in the school declined. She stated that this process has to be reversed, and inventory must be taken of the number of rooms available in schools.

Commissioner Powell noted that the practice of closing sections in schools also created problems with student placement, particularly in accommodating late arrivals. She stated that students registering late tended to be placed wherever there appeared to be seat capacity (v. room capacity), leading to a great deal of cross-zone busing and exorbitant transportation costs.

Commissioner Elliott extended her heartfelt appreciation for the hard work performed by the staff at School No. 41. She discussed the difficulty in making a decision about this school because the Board and Superintendent are aware of the diligent efforts that have been made toward improvement. Commissioner Elliott thanked the staff for their efforts, and expressed hope for a positive outcome from this situation.

Commissioner Evans pointed out that this is his last Excellence in Student Achievement Committee meeting. He assured his colleagues that the Board President will keep them informed about the status of School No. 41 since the considerations discussed in this evening's meeting are extremely important.

Commissioner Evans noted that he has served as the chair of a number of committees during his tenure on the Board of Education: Excellence in Student Achievement Committee (ESA); Board Governance Committee; Community and Intergovernmental Relations Committee; and his launch of the Audit Committee. He pointed out that the ESA Committee addresses many substantial issues in the District, and expressed the hope that the Board will continue to conduct these types of discussions because the Path Forward initiative and other emerging developments will require this type of deliberation. Commissioner Evans pointed out that this level of deliberation cannot be conducted in a Board meeting because of the volume of resolutions that have to be addressed. He also commended Toyin Anderson for her thoughtful and engaging participation as the Parent Representative to the ESA Committee.

Commissioner White noted that Commissioner Hallmark raised an important point regarding the next steps in the process regarding School No. 41. He announced that the Board will have ongoing discussions internally and with the Superintendent.

Commissioner White stated that he was aware that there was no list of receivers approved by the NYS Education Commissioner, so he proceeded to contact a number of potential candidates. He explained that he acted to prevent the Board from being left with no options. Commissioner White reported that he just received news that the NYS Education Commissioner has been contacted by a prospective receiver, but he was unable to provide any further information at this point because it is confidential. He noted that this entire process is new to everyone, but agreed with Commissioner Elliott that the

District will endure. Commissioner White also emphasized that the entire focus in this process should be on relationships because statutes, regulations, timelines, and requirements can all be changed. He noted that success depends on the relationships the District has with the state and with the community.

Commissioner White reminded his colleagues that 14 schools were initially placed under the Superintendent's receivership, and only 10 schools are currently in this situation. He added that only one of these schools is subject to being placed under the control of an external receiver.

Commissioner White also cautioned that the District has three other schools at risk of being placed under external receivership if substantial improvements are not made by the end of the 2017-18 school year, so attention must also be devoted to planning for these schools.

Meeting adjourned at 7:36PM.