

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Business Meeting
December 17, 2015

Attendance: President White and Vice President Elliott, Commissioners Adams, Campos, Cruz, Evans, and Powell; Superintendent Bolgen Vargas; EPO Superintendent Shaun Nelms; Board Clerk Shanai Lee.

President White convened the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

- I. The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by a young audience member.
- II. **Acceptance of Minutes:** Motion to accept the minutes of the November 19th Business Meeting made by Commissioner Evans, seconded by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-0 with Vice President Elliott absent.

Recognition: Commission Campos, on behalf of the Rochester Board of Education, recognized three staff members, two teachers and a cafeteria aide, from Francis Parker School, No. 23 for their dedication to the academic success of the school's student body. Ms. Robin Goldberg a 1st grade teacher, Ms. Kelly Follman a music teacher, and Ms. Patricia McKinney a cafeteria aide were all presented with a *Yes We Can* award for their effort in supporting, challenging and motivating students of Francis Parker School, No. 23.

Earlier in the year, Commissioner Campos, announced that she would not seek re-election to the school board after eight years of service. Commissioner Campos was recognized for her many years of service on the Board by Commissioner Evans on behalf of the Board.

- III. **Speakers Addressing an Agenda Item:** No speakers were present.
- IV. **Speakers Not Addressing an Agenda Item:** Community member Lieutenant Commander Julio Vicente spoke about various issues and concerns plaguing the Rochester City School District.

Vice President Elliott arrived at 7:47 p.m.

- V. **Superintendent's Report (East High School EPO):** EPO Superintendent Shaun Nelms provided an overview of the alternative academic programs available to students of East High School. In discussing the programs he noted that additional supports are provided to graduate students in a timely manner. The alternative education available include Big Picture, Quest, and Freedom School. All of these programs serve students that have repeated courses or may be overage and under-credited for graduation with their cohort. In presenting the programs, Dr. Nelms introduced Susan Meier, Chief Academic Officer of East, and Deon Rodgers, Dean of Students for the Big Picture Learning Program who oversee the programs.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Vargas provided the Board with a recap of the various initiatives he has instituted during his tenure at the Rochester City School District. Dr. Vargas noted that he and his leadership team has worked improve attendance by closely monitoring the associated metrics. In discussing learning time, Dr. Vargas indicated that prior to his tenure Rochester children received the least instruction time of any students in Monroe County. Currently, the District provides more opportunities for full-day Pre-K, full-day Kindergarten or summer learning than any other district in the county. Additionally, all schools have significantly increased art, music, sports and extra-curricular activities to engage students. Dr. Vargas stated that 95 percent of our city's four-year-olds take advantage of full-day Pre-Kindergarten, and that Pre-K programming will be offered to nearly 1,000 three-year-olds beginning in January, the promote the District's initiative to ensure that all are able to read, at grade level, by the third grade. And finally, in discussing financial stability Dr. Vargas stated that the District has worked to implement all of the abovementioned programs and initiatives reducing the District's structural budget deficit, annual unemployment costs and other markers of financial mismanagement. He noted that under his leadership, the District's administrators have identified efficiencies and shifted resources to spend more on the instruction and services that directly benefit children. Members of the Board commended Dr. Vargas for his efforts.

VI. Board Reports:

Audit Committee

Chair Mary Adams: The Audit Committee met on December 1st with the External Auditor Freed Maxick CPAs, to review the results of the District's financial audit for the year ending June 30, 2015. All Board Members received a draft copy of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) and had an opportunity to ask questions and attend the meeting. The Office of Auditor General reviewed the draft CAFR and the concerns communicated to Administration have been addressed in the final version, which has been provided to each Board member.

The Committee is seeking Board approval for Resolution No. 2015-16: 431, to accept the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the year ending June 30, 2015. These financial results will be submitted to the New York State Education Department after Board approval. The next Audit Committee Meeting is currently scheduled for Monday, January 4, 2016, immediately following the Organization Meeting.

Finance Committee

Chair Jose Cruz: The Finance Committee met on Thursday, December 10th to consider Resolution Nos. 2015-16: 408 through 418, and 427 and 428. Members of the Finance Committee recommend approval of the November 2015 Financial Report, and the proposed amendments to the 2015-16 RCSD budget. A motion to accept the financial report and the budget amendments was made by Commissioner Cruz, and seconded by President White. Motion carries 5-1 with Vice President Elliott and Commissioner Adams absent. The following resolutions were reviewed by the Finance Committee, and are advanced to the Board with recommendation: Resolutions 413 through 416 for Procurement & Supply; Resolutions 417 and 418 for Educational Facilities; and Resolution 427 and 428 for Other.

Members of the Finance Committee also reviewed a resolution (Resolution No. 2015-16: 412) and received a presentation regarding a proposed agreement with RTS to provide transportation to RCSD secondary students for the 2016-17 school year. After considerable discussion, Committee members decided to postpone consideration of this resolution to allow time for the Administration to prepare a plan for issuing an RFP and conducting an open bidding process to solicit proposals from a variety of vendors for transportation services.

Committee members discussed a comparative analysis of the services and costs of transportation through RTS and through First Student. Members of the Finance Committee also requested a plan for issuing an RFP and conducting an open bidding process, including timelines. The deadline for submitting the plan is Friday, December 18th. The Finance Committee will reconvene next week to consider this information. The next scheduled Finance Committee Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 21st, following the Policy and Board Governance Committee meetings.

Excellence in Student Achievement Committee

Chair Malik Evans: The Excellence in Student Achievement Committee met on Tuesday, December 8th, to hear a number of presentations:

- Implementation of the EngageNY curriculum to encourage reading on grade level by 3rd grade
- Update on the Student Placement process and data regarding the number of students attending a neighborhood school or a school within their zone
- Background information on the use of the vendor Strategic Measurement and Evaluation, Inc. to score NYS ELA and Math assessments within the required 2-3 week timeframe.

With respect to implementing the EngageNY curriculum, Committee members were pleased to learn of efforts to make modifications to provide greater cultural relevance to RCSD students. This effort needs to be followed up with culturally sensitive instructional practices to ensure that the content is delivered effectively and in a way that engages students. Members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee discussed the Rochester curriculum previously used in the District, and emphasized the need to maintain continuity in the educational process to maximize success for students and staff.

The Executive Director of Reading by 3rd Grade, Katie Yarlett, described the different aspects of the Core Knowledge Curriculum for Language Arts and the gains that students have made in early grades in reading and readiness to begin the school year on grade level. The assignment of at least one Reading Teacher to each elementary school has also led to significant growth in student literacy in the early grades. Committee members look forward to hearing about the impact of these efforts, particularly since reading is so critical to all future learning and highly predictive of student success.

The update on the student placement process indicated that few RCSD students attend schools in their neighborhood (ranging from 1-35%, depending on the school). Although the majority of elementary students attend a school within their zone, students continue to be transported at a distance and into neighborhoods with which they are unfamiliar. The distance and transportation issues compound difficulties for parents to attend meetings or to participate in their child's school.

Members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee also expressed concern about placement of students whose parents do not participate in the school choice process. Suggestions were presented for having advocates for these students, and involving students in 7th or 9th grade in the school choice process for themselves.

Committee members also raised concerns about students with disabilities and the Special Education program, noting that issues have arisen in the last two years. Last year, projections of student enrollment and staffing needs were inaccurate and led to substantial fiscal implications for the District. This year, there have been concerns about students with disabilities being placed in classrooms that do not meet their needs and/or not receiving the services specified in their IEP. Committee members emphasized the importance of addressing these concerns to ensure that problems do not continue into another school year.

Ms. Goldammer, Director of Student Placement, described the placement process and attempts to balance between minimizing out-of-zone placement and disruption of the student's educational experience by requiring them to transfer schools whenever their family moves to another zone. She also presented recommendations of ways in which Board members can support the student placement process:

- Bringing concerns to the attention of the Placement Office;
- Discussing the placement and school choice process with parents;
- Encouraging families to register and/or participate early in the process;
- Re-examining the Parent Preference/School Choice Policy (5153)

The Excellence in Student Achievement Committee also reviewed one of the resolutions presented this evening for your consideration (Resolution No. 2015-16: 426). This resolution pertains to a proposed agreement with Strategic Measurement and Evaluation, Inc. to score all of the District's Math and ELA assessments for grades 3-8, which are required to be completed within a 2-3 week timeframe for submission to the State. The cost of the proposed agreement is approximately the same as having RCSD classroom teachers score the exams and having substitute teachers cover their classrooms during this time. Outsourcing scoring of the exams allows teachers to remain with their students in the classroom. This resolution was approved by the members of the Committee, and is advanced this evening to the full Board with recommendation. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, January 19, 2016, following the Community & Intergovernmental Relations Committee Meeting.

Community and Intergovernmental Relations Committee (CIGR)

Chair Cynthia Elliott: The Community & Intergovernmental Relations Committee met on Wednesday, December 2, 2015 to discuss the widely circulated video clips of the student being slammed by the police officer in South Carolina and the substitute teacher being bullied by students in Chicago Public Schools. The videos sparked a rich discussion about the roles and duties of School Resource Officers and School Sentries in our schools among diverse stakeholders and representatives including parents, students, Rochester Police Department, Student Leadership Conference, RCSD Administration and the Department of School Safety and Security, Parent Advisory Council, Community Task Force, UNITE Rochester, and Board Members.

The Committee reviewed Resolution No. 2015-16:430, Agreement regarding Services of School Resource Officers. The Committee advanced the Resolution to the Board for full consideration. Vice President Elliott thanked Chief Michael Ciminelli, Commander Joseph Morabito, and Sergeant Laird of the Rochester Police Department; Student Representative Savion Rambert and members of the Student Leadership Council; Chair Ericka Simmons of the Parent Advisory Council; Dr. Christiana Otuwa, Adele Bovard, and Lori Baldwin; and members of UNITE Rochester and the Community Task Force for their attendance and participation in meeting.

The Committee also advanced the 2016 Legislative Agenda to the Board for full consideration. Additional items on the proposed Legislative Agenda include: clarification on the Receivership Law regarding actual impact and the rules for Boards of Education; support for NYS Assemblywomen Cathy Nolan's Bill on Safe and Supportive Schools; support the policy recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Committee of the NYS Regents to Improve Outcomes for Boys and Young Men of Color; and educating ourselves on state education financing issues involving the Suburban/Rural Tax Cap and its implications for urban districts. The next CIGR Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 19th at 6:00 p.m.

Policy Committee

Chair Willa Powell: The Policy Committee met on December 10th following the Finance Committee. The Committee received an update on the Code of Conduct work from Spero Michailidis, a member of the Community Task Force. He stated that the Community Task Force is currently in an engagement process to gain feedback from various stakeholders and groups. Commissioner Powell commended the work of the Community Task Force as a group spearheading the draft of the Code of Conduct.

Dr. Donna Harris, the Consultant Research Analyst for Latino Affairs and Bilingual Education, presented her research work in the District around issues of student placement, bilingual education, and bilingual program access. The goal of her work is to develop a strategic plan and to examine how the needs of Latino and bilingual students are being addressed at the forefront.

Maurice Snipes and Ann Brady of the District's Human Capital Initiative Department presented on two Policy Deliverables: Policy 9110-Equal Employment Opportunity and Policy 3460-Incidental Teaching. Commissioner Powell invited them to come back in January and present to the Policy Committee regarding the trends and issues around the new hire, termination, and suspension data.

Board Clerk Shanai Lee presented on proposed changes to the by-laws based on the recommendations of the Monroe BOCES and the by-laws found in Buffalo and Syracuse. During the January Policy Committee Meeting, we will receive reports on policy deliverables and revisit the Equal Employment Opportunity data provided by the Human Capital Initiative Department. The next Policy Committee Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 21st at 5:30 p.m.

Board Governance Committee

Chair Melisza Campos: The Board Governance Committee met on Thursday, December 4th to begin discussions about the upcoming superintendent selection process, the Board Governance Committee hosted a Committee of the Whole meeting on Thursday, December 3rd to discuss the superintendent search process. Tim Kremer of the New York State School Boards Association met with the Board to discuss the process. Though NYSSBA does not facilitate searches, Mr. Kremer welcomed the opportunity to discuss with the Board the following points:

- How to conduct a highly professional search that will attract the very best candidates and bring credit to the board for the manner in which the process was conducted.
- Key elements of the search process, particularly how and when to involve staff and community members while ensuring board control over all key decisions.
- Critical steps in a search – developing the selection criteria, candidate recruitment, candidate screening, interviewing the most qualified candidates and selecting the next superintendent.
- When and why it becomes important to engage a consultant to assist in the search.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 21st.

President's Report

President Van Henri White: President White announced that in honor of the true spirit of the holiday season, the Rochester City School District initiated a Holiday Food Basket drive to assist families in need. While it is traditional to expect a holiday feast as part of the festivities, many families in the Rochester community struggle with hunger. Students and staff throughout the District contributed to the food drive, with 31 schools participating and collective bargaining units providing generous donations.

He stated that members of the Rochester Board of Education and staff gathered enough food to fill seven Holiday Food Baskets this year, having spearheaded a toy drive last year to ensure that children would receive a gift for the holidays. Each basket contains enough food to fill containers the size of recycling bins, and includes all of the ingredients for a holiday meal: from turkey or ham to mashed potatoes and gravy to cake mix and frosting. Additional items for daily fare have also been included, such as peanut butter, jelly, rice, pasta, and spaghetti sauce.

Per the Board's Bylaws, Policy 2300 President White announced that the president has the right and responsibility to appoint standing and ad hoc/special committees of the Board. President White indicated that he has appointed an ad hoc committee, consisting of himself, Vice President Elliott and Commissioner Evans, to facilitate the superintendent search process on behalf of the Board. He stated that the charge of the ad hoc committee is review and evaluate all relevant and appropriate information pertaining to the recruitment, identification and appointment of a permanent Superintendent of Schools. The Board will consider the advice of the Committee in securing the best academic, fiscal and public engagement leader for our District and community. The recommendation of this Committee shall be advisory only, and shall not be binding upon the Board of Education.

President White stated that the 2016 Organizational Meeting would be held on Monday, January 4th at 6:00 p.m. He mentioned that at this meeting, new members of the Board will be sworn-in office,

officers of the Board will be elected, and several designations will be made to appoint individuals and assign responsibilities for District affairs.

Lastly, President White announced that the District's annual School Choice EXPO, scheduled for Saturday, January 9th from 10:00AM – 3:00PM at MCC's Damon City Campus. He noted that the School Choice EXPO provides an opportunity for each building to highlight the programs and activities that make their school unique. It also allows our parents and students to make an informed decision in their school selection for the 2016-17 school year.

VII. Resolutions

2015-16: 381: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Campos. Seconded by Vice President Elliott. Adopted 7-0.

2015-16: 382-401: Motion to adopt was made by Vice President Elliott. Seconded by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 7-0.

Resolutions were not submitted for Resolution No. 2015-16: 384, 385, 394, 396, 397,398, 399, 400, and 402.

2015-16: 403-406: Motion to adopt was made by Vice President Elliott. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 6-1 with Vice President Elliott dissenting.

2015-16: 407: Motion to adopt was made by Vice President Elliott. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 5-1 with President White abstaining due to familial relationship and Vice President Elliott dissenting.

2015-16: 408-411: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Cruz. Seconded by Vice President Elliott. Adopted 5-1 with Commissioner Powell dissenting and Commissioner Adams absent.

2015-16: 412: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Campos. Seconded by Vice President Elliott. Adopted 5-2 with President White and Commissioner Powell dissenting.

2015-16: 413-416: Motion to adopt was made by Vice President Elliott. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 7-0.

2015-16: 417-431: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Cruz. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 7-0.

2015-16: 432: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Campos. Seconded by Vice President Elliott. Adopted 6-1 with Vice President Elliott dissenting.

2015-16: 433-434: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Campos. Seconded by Vice President Elliott. Adopted 7-0.

2015-16: 435: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Campos. Seconded by Vice President Elliott. Adopted 5-2 with Vice President Elliott and Commissioner Adams dissenting.

Motion to waive the requirement that written materials must be delivered to each Board member no later than forty-eight (48) hours prior to consideration made by Commissioner Evans, seconded by Commissioner Cruz. Motion carries 7-0.

2015-16: 436: Motion to adopt was made by Commissioner Evans. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. Adopted 7-0.

Resolution No. 2015-16: 364 was referred to the Policy Development and Review Committee and the Finance and Resource Allocation Committee for further review and discussion.

VIII. Unfinished Business: None.

IX. New Business: None.

Motion to enter into executive session to discuss matters related to the employment of specific individuals made by Commissioner Adams at 10:30 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. Motion carries 7-0.

Motion to enter into open session made by Commissioner Powell at 12:11 a.m. Seconded by Commissioner Evans. Motion carries 7-0.

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Evans, seconded by Commissioner Powell at 12:15 a.m. Motion carries 7-0.