

Rochester Board of Education  
Business Meeting May 24, 2007  
6:30 p.m.

Minutes

**Attendance:** President Garcia, Commissioners Brennan, Elliott, Powell, Thompson, and White. Student Representative Evans. Vice President Evans arrived at 7:05 p.m.

President Garcia convened the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

- I) The Student Representative led the Pledge of Allegiance and Act of Reverance.
- II) Motion to accept minutes of March 28, March 29, April 19, April 30, and May 10, 2007 by Commissioner Brennan. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-0 (VP Evans not present) with amendment to May 10 minutes to include comments by Commissioner Brennan.
- III) Speakers Addressing an Agenda Item: None.
- IV) Superintendent's Report: Dr. Cala discussed the Monroe County Senior Recognition Dinner at which District students were honored; student winners in the "Doors to a Brighter Future" art contest at the 2007 Greater Rochester Home Show; a SOTA student who won an American Visions & Voices national award in the 2007 Scholastic Art contest; student winners in the 2007 Sokol High School Literary Contest; academic achievements by students at the Edison School of Imaging & Information Technology; the Rochester Teen Poetry Slam team with students from SOTA, Wilson, Edison, East and Monroe High Schools, which placed second in the New Jersey and New York City Regional Poetry Slam; student success in the pre-engineering program sponsored by RIT Women in Engineering; School of The Arts music group awards at the 2007 Heritage Music Festival in Washington, D.C.; and student winners in the annual Rochester Storytelling Festival. Commissioner Thompson asked about the District high schools that did not have an 'outstanding senior' listed.
- V) Board Standing Committee Reports

**Student Representative**

The Student Leadership Congress has conducted its last business meeting of the year and is working on its end-of-year presentation to the Board for the June 21 meeting.

**Policy**

Chair Thomas Brennan reported that the Policy Committee met May 1 to review and discuss the proposed Cell Phone Policy and Conflict of Interest Policy. The Committee reviewed the need to better manage the distribution of cell phones to District staff. The committee will receive and discuss a revised policy at the next meeting that will detail the employees affected by the policy and include a complete definition of cell phones along with proposed guidelines and regulations. The Committee also considered a newly proposed Conflict of Interest policy. The Committee will meet again to further discuss the similarities and differences between the proposed Conflict of Interest Policy and the existing School District Officer and Employee Code of Ethics Policy (Policy No. 2160).

### **Community and Intergovernmental Relations**

Member Thomas Brennan said CIGR met April 23 and May 15 to receive an update on the Rochester Children's Zone and the Parent Partnership Council. The RCZ has entered the implementation phase and conducted a conference entitled: Moving from Plan to Action: The Rochester Children's Zone.

Attending were RCS youth, residents, the faith community, service providers, business, government, higher education, and private, parochial, and public schools. The initiative is expected to move out of the District in June 2007. The Parent Partnership Council is in its second year and has formed partnerships with several other groups, conducted a variety of parent workshops, and will hold its first elections next month. Goals for next year include continuing current initiatives and recruiting additional members.

This group was created through Board Policy 1900, Parent Involvement, which is why quarterly reports are provided to CIGR.

### **Board Governance**

Chair Cynthia Elliott said Governance did not meet last month because of the budget meetings. The committee will meet in May 30 to discuss the status of the business meeting date, a Board personnel committee, the role of president and vice president, the resolution packet format, and the special assistant vacancy.

### **Finance**

Chair Willa Powell said the Finance Committee met on Thursday, May 24 to review the April 2007 Financial Reports and resolutions 731 through 764. The Committee seeks a motion to accept the April 2007 financial reports and recommends all of the reviewed resolutions to the Board for approval. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 14 at 5:30 pm. Motion to accept financial reports by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner White. Adopted 6-0 with VP Evans not present.

### **Quality Assurance**

Chair Shirley Thompson said Quality Assurance met on Monday, May 7 to discuss the Registration Review process and raising the legal drop-out age. The Registration Review process is the primary method by which the Board of Regents holds schools accountable for academic performance. The QA Registration Review dialogue was spurred by the June 2007 closing of Frederick Douglass Preparatory School. When schools close permanently, districts must submit a school closure plan to the State Education Department detailing how the district will meet the educational needs of the displaced students. QA will be following this process regarding Frederick Douglass. QA member Commissioner Elliott proposed that the Board raise the legal drop-out age to 18 in order to be more sure that students are making a thoughtful, mature decision. QA referred this issue to Community and Intergovernmental Relations because legislative intercession is required first. QA referred raising the drop-out age from 16 to 17 to policy. QA's next meeting is Monday, June 11 at 6 p.m. The main topic will be a discussion of MAP, the Major Achievement Program. Also on the agenda is an update on the status of the African and African American Studies Department.

### **Audit**

Chair White said the Committee is awaiting a report from independent counsel regarding the Board's rights and responsibilities in the Stage 3 grievance process; the report will be distributed to the full Board.

## **VI) Resolutions**

**2006-07: 704-730.** Motion to adopt by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Brennan. Commissioner Elliott raised the issue of the Board approving actions that have already taken effect. Chief Human Resources Officer Joanne Giuffrida said when contract substitutes are hired provisionally, they receive service credit from the date of hire as contract substitutes. She also said HR is dependent on individual buildings for the paperwork for leaves and resignations and it is not always received in a

timely fashion. Commissioner Elliott asked whether details on HR resolutions could be provided in the advance packet of materials the Board receives. Ms. Giuffrida said she could flesh out the information based on instructions from the Board regarding types of information commissioners want, or commissioners can ask questions prior to the meeting through Board staff. Commissioner White asked about ceremonies for retirees. Ms. Giuffrida said there is no central ceremony. Resolutions 704-730 adopted 7-0 except for 704, 718, 720 and 723, which were adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting; and 717, which was adopted 5-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting and President Garcia abstaining because of a personal relationship.

**2006-07: 731-759.** Motion to adopt by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Thompson. Commissioner Elliott said several of the resolutions were very general and not specific to work being done. Director of Facilities Thomas Keysa said the resolutions allow the District to use engineers and architects as the need arises. Commissioner Powell added that if the funding in the contracts is not needed it isn't spent. Resolutions 731-759 adopted 7-0 except for 733, 734, 737, 739-42, 748, and 751, which were adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting.

**2006-07: 760-762.** Motion to adopt by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Brennan. Adopted 7-0. Commissioner Elliott asked which minority group Lewis General Tires, Inc. denotes. Director of Procurement Gary Smith said he would get the information. Commissioner White said resolutions declaring MWBE should state which minority is represented. President Garcia added that all commissioners are interested in having additional minority vendors doing business with the District.

**2006-07: 763.** Motion to adopt by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Thompson. Commissioner Thompson asked with the satisfaction survey stipulated in the previous year had been conducted. Dr. Cala said he believed the survey had been completed. CFO James Coney said he is looking for dramatic improvement in the food service operation next year. Mr. Coney said he thought a survey had been done before he arrived; a survey has not been done since his arrival because he wanted to focus on the improvements that need to be made. Dr. Cala said a satisfaction survey will be done before the end of the contract (2008) and in time to inform any rfp for a new contract. Adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting.

**2006-07: 764.** Motion to adopt by Commissioner Elliott. Second by Commissioner Brennan. Adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting.

**2006-07: 765-775.** Motion to adopt by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Thompson. Commissioner Elliott said there are empty seats on yellow buses and the transportation system can be better managed. Commissioner White asked how bus matrons are allocated. Chief Operating Officer C. Michael Robinson said matrons are used on some special education buses and long rides in the urban suburban program. Commissioner Elliott said she wants to know how many students are bused to schools outside of their neighborhoods who would not need busing if they attended their neighborhood school. Dr. Cala said he would provide that information. Adopted 7-0 except for 765 and 766, which were adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting.

VII) Unfinished Business: None

VIII) New Business

Commissioner White commended the administration for the extra efforts being put forward to help ensure that students graduate. Dr. Cala said several short-term initiatives are in place.

IX) Speakers Addressing an Agenda Item

James Muhammad discussed the Millions More Movement Upstate New York Education Conference and urged Board members to attend on June 30.

Michelle Windom thanked the Board and Cheryl Holloway for help with her daughter's transfer.

Donna Edwards and Diane Lewis spoke in support of the Great Beginnings Program and provided a number of petitions also in support.

Taquina Boydston thanks the Board on behalf of her sister, Ms. Windom, and her niece, and said children should be the priority, especially those who are in school to learn.

Maryann Wolfe offered help from six to seven organizations willing to help students graduate.

Tanya Homer spoke on behalf of the Great Beginnings Program and provided additional petitions.

X) Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Commissioner White. Second by Commissioner Evans.  
Adopted 7-0 at 7:57 p.m.

## DRAFT -- NOT APPROVED BY THE BOARD

Student Representative Maurice Evans spoke of the Student Leadership Congress's appreciation for Dr. Rivera's work in the District. The SLC completed production of its Public Service Announcements in March.

Policy: Chair Thomas Brennan said the next Policy Committee meeting is April 25. He recognized Special Assistant to the Board of Education Shanai Lee for her high quality service to the Board. Ms. Lee is leaving Board staff May 14. Commissioner Brennan also complimented Dr. Rivera and said the vast majority of the community understands that children in Rochester will have better lives because of Dr. Rivera.

Community and Intergovernmental Relations: Chair Malik Evans reported that the enabling legislation for the Facilities Modernization Program has been submitted to Assemblyman David Gantt and Senator Joseph Robach in anticipation that it will be introduced and voted on during this session of the New York State Legislature.

Finance: Chair Willa Powell said the committee met April 17 to review the monthly financial reports and recommends all of the reviewed resolutions for approval. Commissioner Powell pointed out that some of the facilities resolutions are a result of the District working cooperatively with the City of Rochester. The committee also recommends approval of the Third Quarter Student Activity Fund Report. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 24 at 6:30 pm. This meeting will be a Finance Committee of the Whole meeting to review the third (final) section of the Budget Book. The next regularly scheduled meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, May 8th.

- o Motion to accept the monthly financial reports by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott absent.
- o Motion to accept the Student Activity Fund Report by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott absent.

Quality Assurance: Chair Shirley Thompson said Quality Assurance met Monday, April 16 to discuss the Diversity Initiative/Culture Change/Human Resources report, the African and African American Studies Department, New York State's new accountability reporting system, and the challenges faced by students with alternative lifestyles. New York State is retroactively instituting new accountability measures regarding the calculation of graduation rates. These new measures are expected to lower the RCSD graduation rate by more than a dozen percentage points. It does this by counting all students who are with the District for five months -- regardless of why they leave -- as RCSD students until they spend at least five months in another district. QA will work with Community and Intergovernmental Relations to see whether these new regulations can be addressed in Albany. The African and African American Studies Department, following Board approval of the 2007-08 budget, expects to have a director in place by the end of May. QA members continue to have questions regarding the hiring of African Americans and others of color. QA also wants to know how many candidates of color apply and are not hired compared to how many Caucasians apply and are hired. QA's next meeting is May 7 at 6 p.m.

Audit: Chair Van White said Audit met on April 4 to discuss the RTA Grievance Process, Whistleblower Policy, Financial Expert appointment to the Committee, a proposed meeting schedule, and staffing for the Claims Auditor. The Committee agreed that temporary personnel should be added to the Claims Auditor's staff to support the PeopleSoft 8.9 Upgrade Project. The Committee recommends obtaining the advice of outside counsel on the interpretation of the RTA contract language related to the grievance procedure.

**DRAFT -- NOT APPROVED BY THE BOARD**

- Motion to obtain advice of outside counsel re: RTA contract language/grievance procedure by Commissioner Thompson. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 5-1 with Commissioner Powell dissenting and Commissioner Elliott absent.

**VI) Consideration of Resolutions**

Commissioner Powell asked that Resolutions 2006-07: 696 and 697 be voted on separately.

2006-07: 627-649. Motion by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott absent, except for 2006-07: 637, adopted 5-0 with Commissioner Elliott absent and President Garcia abstaining because of a personal relationship.

2006-07: 650-669. Motion by Commissioner Brennan. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott absent.

2006-07: 670-676. Motion by Commissioner Thompson. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott absent.

2006-07: 677-682. Motion by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Brennan. Adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott absent.

2006-07: 683-695. Motion by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott absent.

2006-07: 696. Motion by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott absent.

2006-07: 697. Motion by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott absent.

**VII) No unfinished business.**

**VIII) New Business:** Commissioner White proposed several ideas to increase the 2007 graduation rate. Of 1,564 potential graduates, 494 are at risk of not crossing the stage in June. He proposed that Central Office staff be allowed to help students two hours per week. Sixty-six days left. Also get the community involved and reassign National Board Certified teachers to troubled schools. Provide them with a financial incentive if necessary. Also, restore the positions relating to Chief of Standards and Accountability and the Managing Director of Student Data to provide real-time assessment of where students are, academically. Dr. Rivera said his chiefs have prepared a 10-point plan to address the graduation rate. Commissioner Evans thanked Commissioner White for coming up with his plan.

**IX) Speakers on Other Than Agenda Items**

The Rev. George Nicholas: There are low expectations and the acceptance of academic mediocrity. All children can excel. Children are the clients and parents are the shareholders. It is time for radical education reform.

The Rev. Willie Harvey: The schools and the community must work together for children.

**DRAFT -- NOT APPROVED BY THE BOARD**

Minister Clifford Florence: Parents should have been notified of the DICA (District in Corrective Action) status. The community was led to believe the children are improving. There is a lack of parental notification of fighting and students feel unsafe. The District rewards failure. Parents feel marginalized. The District needs to strengthen school based planning on side of parents. The challenge to the new leadership is to stop the down-spiraling and raise expectations for all children.

- X) Adjournment: Motion by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott absent at 7:14 p.m.