

Rochester Board of Education
Minutes
August 16, 2007

6:30 p.m.

Attendance: President Garcia, Vice President Evans, Commissioners Brennan, Elliott, Powell, Thompson and White; Interim Superintendent Dr. Cala; Board Clerk L. Dunsmoor.

President Garcia convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

- I) Commissioner Brennan led the Act of Reverence and Pledge of Allegiance.
- II) Motion to approve minutes of July 19, 2007 by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0 with corrections by Commissioner Elliott.
- III) Speakers Addressing an Agenda Item: Clara Broadnax said adequate time is needed for parental input into the Code of Conduct and that consequences should be in writing; Mildred Eady, Kathleen Fisher and Clianda Florence all spoke in favor of the African and African American Studies Department; Myra Brown and Howard Eagle of the Anti-Racism Movement (ARM) said the department should be expanded into the Department of African and African American Affairs to address institutional racism and Mr. Eagle provided a written statement; Lori Thomas read from the proposed Code of Ethics and said it is incompatible with public interest. She also discussed the Superintendent Search and asked whether the information provided through surveys was even considered.
- IV) Dr. Cala introduced winners of the annual Orrin T. Shapiro Writing Award. He announced that he has been appointed to Governor Spitzer's Children's Advisory Cabinet, which is focusing on getting all children into Pre-K and ensuring that all children have health care. He discussed the reauthorization of NCLB and asked the Board to write letters supporting changes that would make the legislation work for City School District students. Dr. Cala also introduced a presentation by Perry Ground and students from the Native American Resource Center.
- V) Board Standing Committee reports

Policy: Chairman Thomas Brennan said Policy met August 14. Members conducted a hearing on the Code of Conduct and discussed the Lead-Safe Schools proposal, Attendance Policy 5000, and Parent Involvement Policy 1900. The Lead-Safe Schools proposal represents collaboration among community groups, district administration and the Board. This proposal calls for staff training, facility testing, and regular reports to the Board. It is ground-breaking policy regarding lead remediation in public schools. Commissioner Brennan asked that this proposal be discussed under New Business and voted on in September. Policy has also referred the policy to Community and Intergovernmental Relations as it pertains to the Facilities Modernization Program. Policy may be recommending amendments at a later date regarding input from the public hearing. Discussion will continue on amendments proposed for the attendance policy. Chief among these is extending the policy to include elementary school, grades 1-6, and adding excessive tardiness. The committee has asked the Superintendent to review the administrative regulations that accompany the policy, which will be discussed at the committee's

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September meeting. Policy is also looking into the Parent Involvement Policy, 1900, and have asked the Superintendent to provide a status report on Site Based Planning Teams for the committee's October meeting. Policy's next meeting is Thursday, September 13.

Governance: Cynthia Elliott, Chair, said Governance met July 31. Members discussed the Board's standing committees, the supervision and evaluation of Board staff, and the Board Goals. The committee determined that discussion of how the Board's standing committees are organized could best be accomplished at a retreat with the full Board. The Board's goals for either this school year or calendar year 2008 could also be a retreat item. The committee directed Board staff to start work on a retreat. Board staff rolls up to the Governance Committee. The committee is looking at different ways to evaluate staff. This has not been done in at least two years and it is something Governance plans for this fall and as an annual task in July of each year. Board Governance will meet August 28 and plans to continue discussion of these two items as well as the annual Superintendent's Evaluation.

Community and Intergovernmental Relations: Malik Evans, Chair, said CIGR will follow-up on the apprenticeship issue at its August 27 meeting and will also hear an update on the Rochester Children's Zone.

Finance: Willa Powell, Chair, made a motion to approve the June financial reports. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 7-0. Commissioner Powell made a motion to pull Resolution 120. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 7-0. Commissioner Powell said Finance had reviewed resolutions 97-147 and recommended adoption with the exception of 120. She noted that the budget amendments in resolutions 108 and 109 reflected grant monies received.

Quality Assurance: Shirley Thompson, Chair, Quality Assurance met August 13 and received a presentation on Black English Vernacular, aka Ebonics. This is NOT something that is taught in district schools and it is not used by all African-American students. When appropriate, staff uses BEV, or the student's "home language" as a compare and contrast tool that helps students develop skill in the use of standard English. One point that was emphasized was the need for teachers to be able to skillfully work with students who present with strong Ebonics. These culturally competent instructors are often better able to keep students constructively engaged rather than having the opposite effect, possibly causing students to pull away from school. Dr. Cianca and Ms. Holloway recommended that QA members review research on the Haberman Educational Foundation interview process in order to inform any input provided the administration as it relates to the hiring of culturally competent staff. QA also heard an update on the African and African American Studies Department; if all goes as planned, a director may be in place by mid-September. Members discussed with administration that there should be a balance between adequate planning time and keeping this initiative moving. The amendment to Policy 4350, Multicultural Education, will be subject to Board approval tonight. The amendment will establish the department and provide the Board with a mechanism for oversight through policy. QA asked Human Resources for an update on staffing for 2007-08, specifically new hires by race and gender. The committee received figures for teachers only, which was an inadequate response to the information request. To date, 78 new teachers have been hired. Of these, 19 are African-American; 15 are Hispanic; and 43 are Caucasian. QA is expecting hiring data for all staff at its next meeting, and members have been informed that a full report will also be provided to the Board in October. Quality Assurance's next meeting is Monday, September 10, 6 p.m.. The agenda includes information on suspension/attendance data for 2006-07 and Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA) results for Grades 3-6. Chairwoman Thompson thanked Dr. Marie Cianca, who is retiring, for her work with QA.

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Audit: Van Henri White, Chair, said Audit will meet August 29. Members will discuss the Lead-Safe Schools Policy from a risk management standpoint. The committee will also discuss the role of the Claims Auditor and the relationship of this office to the Board.

VI) Consideration of Resolutions:

Commissioner White noted that he had submitted his questions in writing and thanked staff for answering them. He questioned whether the Young Mothers Program has been evaluated; Dr. Cala said no but that it would be. Commissioner White also questioned the layoff of a reading teacher and asked about the number of reading teachers in the District. Dr. Cala said his philosophy is that all teachers are reading teachers; he noted that the district now has reading specialists but that he would have to look into the issue before providing an answer.

Motion to table Resolution 78 by Commissioner White. Second by Commissioner Elliott. Adopted 6-1 with President Garcia dissenting.

Commissioner Elliott commented on the length of the resolutions; 71 pages for August. She said she has an ethical issue with voting on human resources resolutions in which the actions have already taken place and cited resolution 84. President Garcia said the resolution could be extracted and voted on separately but it could not be broken up to vote on portions of it. He also said Dr. Cala extended the summer school registration process to be sure as many students as possible could attend, which required that additional teachers be hired and that was why the resolution was worded the way it was. Dr. Cala said there are often actions that must be taken between Board meetings; if the Board does not want to vote after the fact, it can call special meetings. Commissioner Powell commended Dr. Cala for putting children first, and if that puts the Board in the position of approving some HR resolutions after the fact, then priorities are in the right place. Commissioner Elliott responded that the Board has a financial responsibility to manage funding as efficiently as possible, and Commissioner Powell said that responsibility is handled when the Board passes a budget that includes funding for summer school.

Commissioner Thompson asked for additional information on the Olweus bullying program, specifically the number of school sites trainers are working in.

2007-08: 64-77. Motion to adopt by Commissioner Brennan. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0 except for 64-72 and 77, which were adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting.

2007-08: 78. Tabled.

2007-08: 79-96. Motion to adopt by Commissioner Brennan. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0 except for 84, which was adopted 5-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting and President Garcia abstaining for personal reasons; and 85-91, which were adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting.

2007-08: 97-107. Motion to adopt by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0 except for 97, which was adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting.

2007-08: 108-109. Motion to adopt by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Brennan. Adopted 7-0.

2007-08: 110-113. Motion to adopt by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 7-0.

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2007-08: 114. Motion to adopt by Commissioner Thompson. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 7-0.

2007-08: 115-151. Motion to adopt by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Evans. Commissioner Thompson asked why some of the policies have accompanying resolutions and other do not. Chief Counsel Michael Looby said he had noticed just before the meeting that there were two policies being acted on that did not have accompanying resolutions, so he provided them quickly to Commissioner Brennan before the meeting began.

Commissioner Powell said the Policy Committee spent a great deal of time discussing the timing of the public hearing and agree it should be held in the spring. Commissioner Brennan said the concerns expressed regarding parent input are extremely valid, the timeline needs to change, and it will.

Resolutions adopted 7-0 except for 117 and 118, adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting; 121 adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott abstaining because of a professional relationship; 124-125, 128 and 147 adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting; and 145, adopted 6-0 with Commissioner Elliott abstaining because of a professional relationship.

VII) Unfinished Business from Previous Meetings:

Resolution 2007-08: 152, Code of Ethics, Policy 2160. Motion to adopt by Commissioner Brennan. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0.

Resolution 2007-08: 153. Cell Phone Policy 8332. Motion to adopt by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Brennan. Adopted 7-0.

Resolution 2007-08: 154. Amendment to Policy 4350, Multicultural Education. Motion by Commissioner White. Second by Commissioner Thompson. Commissioner White thanked all those, past and present, who had worked to move the Department of African and African American Studies forward. Adopted 7-0.

Commissioner Elliott noted the passing of scholar Dr. Asa Hilliard.

Motion to extend meeting beyond 8:30 p.m. by Commissioner Brennan. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 7-0 at 8:29 p.m.

VIII) New Business:

President Garcia asked for a motion to change the committee assignments of two commissioners. Commissioner Elliott will be assigned to Finance and Commissioner Brennan to Quality Assurance. Motion by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0.

October 2007 meeting date. The October 25 meeting conflicts with the annual New York State School Boards Convention. Clerk to poll commissioners regarding new date.

Commissioner Evans thanked Chief Financial Officer James Coney for his work at the District, both in organizing the Office of Auditor General and Board Audit Committee for the Board, and for the District as CFO.

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Dr. Cala recognized administrators appointed by the Board at the meeting.

IX) Speakers on Other Than Agenda Items:

Parent Kerry Coleman criticized district administrators; community member Ron Ring said peace, love, and humanitarianism should be part of the curriculum; community member Glenny Williams criticized the superintendent search process; community member Gary Thompson criticized the superintendent search process and said the NAACP will launch a federal investigation if it finds evidence of side deals; staff member Vicki Gouveia criticized the superintendent search process.

X) Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner White. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 7-0 at 9:02 p.m.