

Rochester Board of Education  
Business Meeting  
December 20, 2007  
6:30 p.m.

Minutes

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

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

- I) Commissioner Brennan led the moment of silence and Pledge of Allegiance.
- II) Commissioner Evans motioned that the minutes of November 29, 2007 be approved. Second by Commissioner Thompson. Adopted 7-0.

President Garcia granted Vice President Evans' point of personal privilege. President Garcia and Commissioner Shirley Thompson were presented with plaques recognizing their service to the students, staff and Board of Education of the Rochester City School District. Each thanked the Board and expressed their gratitude to the Board, the community, the staff, and their families for the work that was accomplished during their tenures. Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Cala was also presented with a plaque from the Board in recognition of his eight months of service to the Board and community. Each commissioner also rendered individual remarks regarding President Garcia, Commissioner Thompson and Dr. Cala.

- III) Speakers Addressing Agenda Items

There were no speakers addressing agenda items.

- IV) Superintendent's Report

Dr. Cala noted that he was appointed to the Governor's Education Advisory Committee, and chairs the pre-K sub-committee. He will speak to Gov. Spitzer about what his role will be after leaving the District. Dr. Cala also discussed partnership opportunities with the University of Rochester and Monroe Community College that will provide scholarships for district graduates. He congratulated staff member Amy Zimmer, who had competed on the television show "The Biggest Loser" and recognized those in the audience being appointed by the Board. Commissioner Elliott asked that Dr. Cala have staff look into scholarship opportunities that are available for students at institutions including Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Cala said he would do that. Commissioner White raised the issue of special education and said there is reason to believe African-American males have been misdiagnosed and why has it taken so long for this to be investigated. Dr. Cala said he wasn't sure but that the audit of special education planned by incoming Superintendent Brizard will shed light on compliance and other special education issues. He noted that half of the students who are suspended are classified as Students With Disabilities.

V) Board Standing Committee Reports

**Student Representative:** Miss Washington said the Student Leadership Congress's drive to collect coats and other winter gear was successful and culminated in more than 75 people benefiting.

**Board Governance:** Chair Cynthia Elliott said the Governance Committee met on Monday, December 17<sup>th</sup> to discuss evaluation of Board staff, Board self evaluations, legal opinion on appointment of Board staff and legal opinion on Board staff inclusion in SEG. The Board Governance Committee and other Board members have evaluated Board staff and have met with staff to briefly discuss their evaluation results. The committee has addressed a number of Governance issues on this year and looks forward to serving the District in the future.

**Finance:** Chair Willa Powell said The Finance Committee met on Thursday, December 13<sup>th</sup> to review the November 2007 Financial Reports and resolutions 379 through 388 and 412. The Committee seeks a motion to accept the November 2007 financial reports and recommends the following reviewed resolutions to the Board for approval: 379-83, 385, and 412. The following resolutions advance to the Board without Committee recommendation: 384 and 386-388. The Finance Committee also received a presentation on Oracle and finalized the Budget calendar for next year. Motion to accept the November Financial Reports by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 7-0.

**Community and Intergovernmental Relations:** Chair Malik Evans announced an award received by the Board from Rochester Community Television for the Board's efforts to have Business Meetings broadcast by RCTV.

**Parent Preference/Managed Choice Ad Hoc Committee:** Co-Chair Willa Powell reported that the committee met in October, November and on Tuesday, December 18. It examined the history of this critical Board policy and ensuing District implementation efforts. The committee proposes immediate next steps and two recommendations.

The immediate next steps are amending the Policy to: Include Zone Improvement Team language and remove transition year language. The Zone Improvement Teams were originally envisioned to advise the Superintendent and cabinet regarding changes that would make schools within the zones more equitable and desirable. Zone Improvement Team language was not included in the final Policy as adopted by the Board. The Committee considers this oversight an essential element of the Policy and recommends that Zone Improvement Teams be put into place for the 2007-08 school year along with the necessary policy wording change.

The recommendations are: That the Superintendent complete an evaluation of the implementation of this policy -- using an inside or outside evaluation team -- and submit an outline of how this evaluation will be completed to the Quality Assurance Committee in January 2008. The Superintendent should solicit Board input to ensure that commissioners' interests and questions will be addressed and answered via the evaluation.

The last recommendation, and this was provided as food for thought as it was not part of the committee's charge, is that as the Superintendent look at the secondary school choice process when considering any plans to improve the performance of secondary schools. Data in other districts shows that the school choice process can have a dramatic impact on student achievement.

***Action: President Garcia directed the identified immediate next steps to Policy and the evaluation recommendation to the Superintendent's Office.***

**Quality Assurance:** Chair Shirley Thompson Quality Assurance met Dec. 20. After reviewing the Frederick Douglass closing plan and the Professional Development Plan for 2007-10, the committee voted to recommend approval by the full Board for both. The Board was provided with these materials.

#### Douglass Closing

On the Superintendent's recommendation, the Board approved a plan on April 19 to close Douglass completely effective June 2007. Two existing schools, the Northeast and Northwest College Preparatory Schools, were moved intact into the building. Parent information meetings were held in May, on evenings, afternoons and weekend. Then-Douglass Principal Vicky Ramos said she, other administrators and counselors reached out extensively to parents regarding the process -- in writing, by phone, and via email. Committee discussion focused on parent involvement/engagement. The outreach efforts of Ms. Ramos and her staff were laudable and we appreciated the information because of ongoing questions regarding how accessible district schools are to parents.

Commissioner Thompson moved that the Board approve the Frederick Douglass closing plan forwarded by the administration. Second by Vice President Evans. Adopted 7-0.

#### Professional Development

The District's Professional Development plan for 2007-1010 must be submitted to the State Education Department and requires Board approval. The plan delineates how PD is aligned with content and student performance standards; designed to demonstrate how classroom instruction/teacher practice will be improved and assessed; and is structured so that teachers have the opportunity to complete at least 175 hours of PD every five years. We emphasized to administrators that follow-up is critical to ensure that skills learned in PD translate into the classroom and into student achievement. We asked about PD for para-professionals and BENTE employees; Chief of Diversity and Leadership Michelle Hancock's said her department is taking on that task and the PD will be developed.

Commissioner Thompson moved that the Board approve the Professional Development Plan for 2007-10. Second by Commissioner Evans. Adopted 7-0.

#### SURR Reports

The committee did not vote to forward the Schools Under Registration Review reports to the full Board for approval. Reports were provided for the International Finance Career High School at Franklin, Jefferson High School, and Monroe High School. The plans must be submitted to the State Education Department. The SURR plans for each school were written by teacher/administrator teams with input from parents. The improvement focus is on literacy, math, school climate/student behavior, and graduation rates. Remedies include professional development, specialized programs for students, student materials and technology. Parent engagement, or the lack thereof, is a recurring theme. Principals can assist the Board by providing written evidence, even if it is anecdotal, regarding their efforts to engage parents. Concern about parent engagement is not what prevented the Committee from forwarding the plan to the full Board for approval, however. A large binder of information was provided to the Committee for its review by administration two days before the meeting. In the absence of Commissioner White and with respect to the volume of information provided, the committee determined that approval of the SURR plans should wait until January 2008 or later. Even though school board approval is required, the three schools began improvement activities at the beginning of this school year,

so the lack of Board approval isn't holding up work that each school community and the superintendent felt was important.

VI) Consideration of Resolutions

2007-08: 356-378 -- Motion to approve by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Brennan. Adopted 7-0 except for 357, 362, 372-375, which were adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting.

2007-08: 379-381 -- Motion to approve by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Thompson. Adopted 7-0.

2007-08: 382-385 -- Motion to approve by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Thompson. Adopted 7-0.

2007-08: 386-388 -- Motion to approve by Commissioner Evans. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting.

2007-08: 389-414 -- Motion to approve by Commissioner Powell. Second by Commissioner Thompson. Adopted 7-0 except for 399-401 and 410, which were adopted 6-1 with Commissioner Elliott dissenting.

VIII) New Business

A motion from the floor regarding an incentive for a Board staff member was tabled until the next Board meeting.

IX) Speakers on Other Than Agenda Items

Charlie Richardson asked the Board to consider alternative education programs to reduce the number of dropouts. Lovely Warren and Gloria Winston Alsag criticized Commissioner Powell for comments she made at the November Business Meeting.

X) Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Thompson. Second by Commissioner Powell. Adopted 7-0 at 8:21 p.m.