

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Community & Intergovernmental Relations Committee Meeting
January 19, 2016

MINUTES

Attending

Commissioners - Board Vice President Cynthia Elliott (Chair), Commissioner Mary Adams, Commissioner Elizabeth Hallmark

Presenters/Guests - T. Andrew Brown (NYS Board of Regents), Niambè Tomlinson (Rochester – Finger Lakes Regional Assistant, U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand)

District Staff – Linda Cimusz (Interim Superintendent), Adele Bovard (District Liaison and Deputy Superintendent of Administration)

Board Staff – Mia Johnson

Board Vice President Elliott called the meeting to order at 5:33PM.

I. Review the Minutes of December 2, 2015 CIGR Meetings

Motion by Commissioner Adams to approve the minutes of the December 2, 2015 CIGR Meeting. Adopted 3-0.

II. NYS Board of Regents: Consideration of Project Based Assessments, Pathways to Graduation, and Federal Waiver of the Every Student Succeeds Act

Vice President Elliott announced that the purpose of this agenda item is to explore the impact and need for different pathways to graduation for Rochester students for higher graduation rates and college and career readiness. She commended School Without Walls for its success and its use of non-traditional ways of learning.

Regent Brown stated that the idea of expanding pathways to graduate is to reach out and encompass all students who may not otherwise graduate. He stated that there are a lot of students not graduating with 80% statewide graduating and questioned what happens to the other 20%. He stated that the goal is to find ways for those student to complete high school and be college and career ready.

Regent Brown stated that the other pathways including project-based assessments are rigorous. The proposed criteria for project-based assessments are failed a Regents exam once or twice, passed the course, and a 95% attendance rate. He further stated that if a student is able to meet the criteria, such a student may not need the project-based assessment. The Board of Regents is still considering and reviewing this proposal. He described that other states have implemented the project-based assessment. He expressed

logistic concerns about the project-based assessment including when it occurs, how a teacher is assigned, etc.

Vice President Elliott asked about where in the process is project-based assessment and when is it expected to begin. Regent Brown responded he anticipated a long time from now because the required computer portal, process, and its associated cost does not exist.

Vice President Elliott expressed concern about the attendance rate criteria as a disqualifier because of reasons why students may be absent. She stated that there has been a practice of teacher penalizing students for being absent or misbehaving by lowering their grade. Regent Brown responded that the entire Board of Regents recognizes that students may be absent for various reasons and does not want them penalized, but provided with opportunities. He further described looking at opportunities for the entire student population – students with disabilities, English language learners, homeless students, and general education students. Vice President Elliott stated that virtual education is a good argument to educate homeless students. Regent Brown described the challenges of homeless students including constantly moving around, not having access to the library, and school districts not wanting them.

Commissioner Adams expressed that it is great to see flexibility regarding goals in educating students and conversations about different pathways. She stated that the goals are to offer an excellent education to every student, students graduate with a meaningful diploma that means high level standards were achieved, and to have every student go through a high quality education process. She stated that she hoped project-based learning would include expeditionary learning and approaches, be along the lines of the consortium schools, and move away from highly standardized testing. She disagreed with concept of failing a Regents exam in order to qualify for the project-based assessment.

Regent Brown stated that this has not been rolled out by the NYS Board of Regents, but presented as an idea before the Board of Regents to consider. It has not been fully embraced and has logistic concerns. He further stated that the Board of Regents wants students to be both college and career ready and wants students to have access to high quality, rigorous education.

Commissioner Hallmark expressed concern around the misunderstanding of project-based learning as an assessment approach instead of a teaching approach. She described that project-based learning should start at the beginning and not as an assessment. She stated that the existing criteria would make the project-based assessment not available to any student. She expressed concern about the language being used in association with project-based learning.

Regent Brown explained that the issue of some with the project-based assessment is that it may appear not to be rigorous. Commissioner Hallmark stated that project-based learning can be more rigorous than high stakes testing. Regent Brown agreed and stated that the way project-based assessment was presented, it would be rigorous.

Vice President Elliott proposed working with the District to craft a letter to send to the Board of Regents providing input that the committee would endorse.

Regent Brown stated that the main challenge is providing a meaningful education to as many students as possible and within the Rochester City School District, there are a lot of students who are not graduating. Commissioner Adams asked Regent Brown to focus on the number of students not graduating, strengthening Career and Technical Education (CTE) and vocational programing, and expanding the number of waivers of consortium schools. Regent Brown responded that the Board of Regents is not discounting other areas like CTE, but looking to broaden this program. He also stated that if there is anything that the District believe would be helpful to students to let him know because he wants to hear more from the District.

III. Discussion and Update of the Transportation Legislation (S5227B and A00178)

Vice President Elliott described the history of the transportation legislation: She received calls about the 1.5 mile eligibility range from parents with large families who had to walk children at least a mile in strollers. As oppose to the District taking the cost, it was suggested to see how the State could reimburse the District at the 0.5 eligibility rate. She expressed uncertainty as to how it was pushed to the NYS Senate. She also described being told by the former RCSD General Counsel that it was cost neutral, but being told by Assemblyman Gantt that it was not cost neutral. She stated this legislation emerged to ensure that children are safe. She stated that within the last two years, she has not received any phone calls regarding transportation. Commissioner Adams confirmed that she has received phone calls.

Deputy Superintendent Bovard stated that the District had talked to the Deputy Director of the Big 5 Conference Jennifer Pyle. The former point person was the former RCSD General Counsel and now the District's Chief of Operations Mike Schmidt is a part of the conversations. Mr. Schmidt created a cost analysis outlining if the District was going to transport today every student within the 1.5 miles to the schools they currently attend, there would be an additional cost. She also stated that Ms. Pyle was provided with an analysis of students in schools by geo-code and zones. Vice President Elliott requested the analysis be displayed and presented at the next CIGR meeting. Deputy Superintendent Bovard stated that Ms. Pyle suggested requesting a pilot program to promote community schools, to provide data on local violence, and to demonstrate the inefficiency of placement and transportation based on geo-code and zone data and its patterns. She expressed the challenge of parents attending school events when their children are enrolled in different schools and high school students opting not to choose schools so they can receive transportation. She stated that the pilot program would be multi-year over the course of 3 to 4 years to demonstrate what the District could do if able to transport within that 1.5 mile limit and would grandfather in grade levels to place students within their home school and geo-code.

Vice President Elliott asked what the pilot program would accomplish. Deputy Superintendent Bovard responded that incoming students would be placed in their geo-code schools and receive full transportation resulting in efficiencies; the pilot program would cover the additional costs.

Commissioner Hallmark asked for clarification on the details of the pilot program. Deputy Superintendent Bovard responded that the pilot program would be only for Rochester City Schools due to the high violence index, high poverty rate, and desire to create community schools. She further stated that such statistics and data would be dramatically different from the other Big 4 districts.

Commissioner Adams asked what would be the current cost if the District were to transport all students. Deputy Superintendent Bovard responded that it is about \$3.1 million based on a cost analysis by Mr. Schmidt if all students were transported within 1.5 miles to the schools they attend today; it would not be State “aidable” funds.

Commissioner Hallmark asked how the pilot would be implemented if it started with the younger students and the other students used the old pattern causing twice as many buses. Deputy Superintendent Bovard responded that that would have to be analyzed and the \$3.1 million did not include enrolling new students and kindergartners into their geo-code, but only considered where students are now. Mr. Schmidt has not done the other analysis yet. Vice President Elliott requested this information for next month’s CIGR meeting. She stated that such information will be helpful to the Board as they attend Lobby Day in March. Deputy Superintendent Bovard stated that there is a very big focus in the budget on community schools and the pilot program proposal will show how far away the District is from that concept. Vice President Elliott responded that near Baden Street Settlement the schools are leaving and the school is one of the most credible institutions in the neighborhood.

Deputy Superintendent Bovard described the District’s expansion of CTE pathways and the potential of the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) credential for students through passing a skills test and an employability profile. She further explained that Chief Keith Babuszczyk has been working with Monroe #1 BOCES, Monroe #2 BOCES, and Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES to do a cooperative employability profile to use in this region to support readiness. Vice President Elliott stated that the skills sets of our students to have align with the skill sets expected with the technology coming into the community in order for them to participate in the opportunities. Deputy Superintendent Bovard responded that the businesses are currently at the table helping to develop the profile. Vice President Elliott also stated that within the organizational culture, there has to be high teacher expectations beyond just passing the Regents exam, but a focus on college and career readiness.

IV. Establishing 2016 CIGR Committee Goals

Vice President Elliott announced that the purpose of this agenda item is to determine the focus and goals of the Committee. Commissioner Adams suggested capturing significant changes and updating the legislative agenda on a regular basis.

Vice President Elliott suggested getting out more on the state and federal level to ensure input and impact on the legislation being proposed on the District. Vice President Elliott also suggested doing more letter writing regarding legislative items and talk more with federal government offices to increase presence.

Commissioner Adams suggested providing a role and supporting the implementation and linkages of partnerships and resources including mental health services.

Commissioner Hallmark suggested conducting forums throughout the city with various stakeholders. Vice President Elliott responded that the Receivership Forum occurred last year and the committee will host more forums including dropping out of school in the spring. Commissioner Hallmark suggested generating a list of topic areas and create a schedule over the course of the year

V. Proposed Board Communication Plan

Vice President Elliott stated that the intent of the proposed Board Communication Plan is to be used as a guide to get information out into the community. She stated the use of the church within the African American community. She plans to do more church visit. It can also serve as a venue to get more information into the community.

VI. Miscellaneous

Vice President Elliott stated that she plans to attend the Big 5 Conference Lobby Day and Monroe County School Board Association Legislative Breakfast. She stated that the latest state and federal legislation is attached to the agenda. She described highlighted the bill of community service as oppose to suspension for students. Vice President Elliott requested the full text for that particular legislation.

VII. 2016 Legislative Agenda Updates

Commissioner Adams stated the first items of the original 2016 Legislative Agenda commented on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and suggested changing it to focus on the implementation and monitoring of the Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA). She asked if it is better to advocate around NYS implementation of ESSA. Vice President Elliott asked Ms. Niambè Tomlinson, Rochester – Finger Lakes Regional Assistant of U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand office, for input on ESSA, where it stands now, and any input on how to approach the Senator in terms of advocacy. Ms. Tomlinson replied that she can coordinate a conference call between the education policy staff in Washington, D.C. and the CIGR committee. Commissioner Adams asked what status of the new legislation's regulation are. Commissioner Hallmark stated that ESSA gives more flexibility to the state and it is up to New York State on how it is interpreted. She further suggested that the committee review ESSA and identify components to advocate for. Interim Superintendent Linda Cimusz stated that the Administration will create a presentation on how the state will implement ESSA.

Commissioner Adams asked if the legislative agenda should advocate for universal transportation instead of specifying the 0.5 mile limit. It was suggested to read universal transportation or 0.5 mile limit.

Vice President Elliott suggested eliminating the stable funding Pre-K line because the legislators recognizes its importance and provided RCSD with funding for 3year olds.

Interim Superintendent Linda Cimusz stated that there is a need to advocate again for the BOCES nurses in our schools because it is not guaranteed funding. She further stated that Rochester is not currently receiving \$8 million advocated for the restoring of the original NYS Foundation Aid formula. Commissioner Hallmark stated that community organizations are advocating for this too.

Vice President Elliott asked about the evaluation and the effectiveness of expanded day learning and questioned if it could be advocated for because there is no substantial data on it. Commissioner Adams requested for an outside evaluation of expanded learning and real data and information on expanded learning. Deputy Superintendent Bovard responded that there are different types expanded day programs and there is a need to study trends.

Commissioner Adams stated that Receivership legislation has an upcoming end date. Interim Superintendent Linda Cimusz responded that the legislation is currently one to two years. Vice President Elliott stated that through a prior conversation with Regent Brown that receivership will remain in some form. Commissioner Adams stated that she is opposed to receivership. Commissioner Hallmark stated that there are questions regarding receivership's impact and how it was put into place.

Vice President Elliott suggested sending a letter of support to NYS Assemblywoman Cathy Nolan for her bill on Safe and Supportive Schools.

Vice President Elliott described the work of 3-on-3-on-3 Task Force. Commissioner Adams requested to add developing and expanding mental health services collaborations and partnerships to improve access to services in schools as an item under the Monroe County. She also stated that if the item on public assistance advocated for eliminating benefits based on student attendance, she would be opposed to it. She stated that there is research on the correlation between food stamps and academic achievement.

Vice President Elliott described the District-City collaboration by stating her role as a representative on the Facilities Modernization Project. She stated that she will review the agenda of the 3-on-3-on-3 Task Force to ensure that it aligns with the 2016 Legislative Agenda. Commissioner Adams stated that she has been advocating for the re-cap evaluation data by The Children's Institute and its potential to impact the Reading By Third Grade initiative aligning with the committee's goals of establishing partnerships. Vice President Elliott questioned if there has been work around Truancy within the District. She also asked if the City's Early Childhood Initiative should remain on the agenda because the mayor has issued a report and unsure of its current status.

Vice President Elliott stated that NYS will not advocate against the Maintenance of Effort based on the inflation rate. Commissioner Adams stated that she thinks that other cities have negotiated their Maintenance of Effort.

Commissioner Hallmark asked about the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Vice President Elliott responded that the CIP takes place in the budget. Commissioner Adams stated that CIP is constantly underspent to maintain facilities and the external auditors noted that too. Vice President Elliott stated that she heard this has been resolved by having long-term and

short-term projects. She commended the City of Rochester for being a great financial manager.

Motion by Vice President Elliott to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Hallmark. **Adopted 3-0.** Meeting adjourned at 7:32PM.