

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Community & Intergovernmental Relations Committee Meeting
August 16, 2016

MINUTES

Attending

Commissioners – Vice President Cynthia Elliott, Commissioner Mary Adams, and President Van White (arrived at 6:11PM)

District Staff – Barbara Deane-Williams (Superintendent), Christiana Otuwa (Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning), Andrew MacGowan (Project Administrator), Robin Hooper (Executive Director of Early Childhood Education), Christopher Suriano (Executive Director of Specialized Services)

Parent Representative –Yvonne Clinkscales (arrived at 6:52PM)

District Liaison – Mike Schmidt (Chief of Operations)

Board Staff –Mia Johnson

Vice President Elliott called the meeting to order at 6:01PM.

I. Review of Minutes of June 7, 2016 CIGR Meetings

Motion by Commissioner Adams. Seconded by Vice President Elliott. Vote 2-0.

Commissioner Adams inquired of Vice President Elliott if the SRO contact would be return to a future CIGR meeting for further discussion. A status update around the SRO contract will be discussed at the September CIGR meeting.

II. Consideration of an Issue: State Pre-K Funding Update – C. Otuwa, R. Hooper, and A. MacGowan

Dr. Hooper stated that the purpose of the presentation was to review the State Pre-K funding update and the District's current status and competitive grant funding sources. Mr. MacGowan states that Rochester has received the most funding for Pre-K programs based on its poverty rate. Vice President Elliott asked if there is any evidence of those who attended the Pre-K program getting out of poverty. Mr. MacGowan responded that such data will be available soon. He stated that there has been a difference in the third grade state tests. He also stated that since the start of UPK, the incoming four year olds have entered with greater needs than ever before. He stated that the students who enter UPK have experienced the highest rates of growth. Vice President Elliott asked how will they reposition and address the students with higher needs compared to those who have previously completed Pre-K. Mr. MacGowan responded that that has been a decade long

challenge, and the transition from half-day to full day and the 3 year old program have helped address the challenge. Dr. Hooper stated that the extra year will be helpful because students are entering as 4 year olds at an age 2 in language capabilities. She stated that the 3 year old Pre-K have high needs who are eligible for free or reduced lunch, come from a family where a language other than English is spoken, or have an Individual Education Plan.

Dr. Hooper stated that the District receive multiple funding streams. She said the District's current grants are not tied to teacher certification. She stated that if there is a change in the legislation regarding teacher certification, it would impact the community based organizations (CBOs) because they have the hardest time getting teachers with certifications and there is a shortage of teachers with early childhood certification.

Dr. Hooper stated that the State pegs Pre-K funding on justified need. She stated that if the State adjusts funding to a 10K flat rate, it would impact Rochester and its justified need including translation services for the 82 languages within the District, parent engagement staff to support parents, supplemental programs – play based therapy and music enrichment pilot programs, and parent tools and training to address socio-emotional and health needs.

Dr. Hooper described that NYSED, Commissioner Elia, and a large advocacy group are considering the consolidation of many of the Pre-K grants and providing a flat rate of 10K per a child for all NY Districts. Vice President Elliott asked if the funding being open to all NY District would have a financial impact on the District. Dr. Hooper responded that it would not, if the District is held harmless and it would represent a 30% cut in per pupil funding. Vice President Elliott inquired what the Board could do to advocate for the District. Dr. Hooper suggested having conversation with legislators and remind them that Rochester is a high need district. She stated that the changes are in a draft proposal that is not yet public or finalized. Vice President Elliott asked if the Board can be kept informed of the progress.

Mr. MacGowan described that the 30% cut in Pre-K funding would result in drastic reductions in funding for CBOs, professional development, curriculum, attendance incentives, and the quality of the program would suffer.

Dr. Hooper stated that no action was taken during the 2016 legislative year and will be put forth for the 2017 budget ask. Dr. Hooper stated that there are early childhood advocates and community groups that support the District including the Early Childhood Development Initiative, Universal Pre-K Policy Advisory Council, and The Children's Agenda. Vice President Elliott inquired if any of the advocate and community groups have people of color as representatives to address cultural issues. Ms. Hooper responded that the Universal Pre-K Policy Advisory Council is diverse because there is an effort to get parents to join and a teacher of color serves on the Council. She also stated that the Early Childhood Development is diverse because the representatives come from different organizations and serve various age groups.

Vice President Elliott stated as a generality why Rochester and similar districts continue to receive the most funding when it does not seem to impact academic achievement. Commissioner Adams responded that the District excels in early childhood based on all objective measures. Commissioner Adams further stated that there was a discussion about Kindergarten readiness and how there appears to be a fall off. She described a need for Kindergarten being ready for children as much as children being ready for Kindergarten because there is this abrupt shift in approaches and the need for a blended approach similar to what occurs in Pre-K. Mr. MacGowan stated that there is also high turnover among Kindergarten teachers.

President White stated that the District is judged by the achievement rates for all students and there needs to be a transition of the Pre-K environment to the Kindergarten environment. Dr. Hooper responded there has been a historic distance between Pre-K and elementary schools which has improved overtime. She stated that with some of the funding, there has to be a transition plan and each year she convenes a transition summit. She stated that there has been a challenge among principals and their current duties to bring them together to learn about Pre-K as well. She stated that she has been working with the Office of Parent Engagement to target parents to work within the school based on their existing relationship with their Pre-K programs as their youth transition to Kindergarten.

Commissioner Adams stated that the adult family educator role is a critical role because they are culturally and community connected. She stated that one of the major disconnects between Pre-K and Kindergarten is parent involvement, empowerment, and engagement. She suggested that the family adult educator should be in Pre-K as well as Kindergarten to serve as a bridge between Pre-K and Kindergarten.

Vice President Elliott suggested adding the advocacy for Pre-K funding to the legislative agenda in order to discuss at the Board's Legislative Breakfast.

Mr. MacGowan stated that the Governor's Office is opposed to the consolidation of Pre-K grants. Mr. MacGowan also raised the point that the Governor will be spending a large amount on the Rochester Anti-Poverty Initiative and cutting Pre-K funding would directly undermine the initiative.

Mr. MacGowan thanked the Board for its continuous support for Pre-K programs. He also recognized that the legislators have been supportive of Rochester's Pre-K programs as well.

Dr. Hooper announced the opening of the new Pre-K center on North Clinton near the Public Transit Center and Central Office. Vice President Elliott stated that she would have preferred the new Pre-K center to be located in a neighborhood.

Commissioner Adams describe the difference between equitable and equal, and understand that there is a move from equitable allocation.

III. Planning Session: Joint Forum for the Board and the Community Task Force

Commissioner Adams stated the CIGR Committee had discussed having a mechanism to increase knowledge around the new Code of Conduct and the Community Task Force's accompanying recommendations to shift school climate. Vice President Elliott suggested hosting a community forum to inform the community about the policy in early October. Commissioner Adams suggested having members of the Community Task Force to assist in planning the upcoming forum.

Ms. Clinkscales advocated that students with individual learning plans need to be in a different environment and stated that she went to Mr. Suriano to discuss the need to create an environment similar to Hope Hall. She also shared the story of her son and his journey through District schools, a charter school, and Hope Hall.

Vice President Elliott stated that she visited Hope Hall with President White and was impressed. Superintendent Deane-Williams described how she conducted a joint training with the staff of Hope Hall and Churchville-Chili. Mr. Suriano stated that he is working with Sister Diana to provide professional development with the District starting with the Northstar program. The professional development will be no cost to the District through a grant. President White stated that the Board supported the Hope Hall model and questioned why the collaboration took nearly two years to occur after the initial visit and discussion. Superintendent Deane-Williams responded that the District needs cohesion and now steps can be taken to join the different parts.

Vice President Elliott described a system issue that does not track students and their credit attainment towards graduation.

IV. 2017 Legislative Agenda

Vice President Elliott asked the Committee to begin thinking about items to add to the 2017 Legislative Agenda. She suggested adding some of the legislative updates included in the committee packet including HR5738/S3168 Stronger Together School Diversity Act of 2016 and HR193/S37 Core Opportunity Resources for Equity and Excellence Act 2015. Ms. Clinkscales suggested HR678/S342 21st Century Classroom Innovations. Commissioner Adams stated a caution around mass blended learning.

Vice President Elliott stated that she will send an email about interest of the legislative agenda and urged the committee to review the legislative updates to inform the legislative agenda.

V. Follow-Up

Motion by Vice President Elliott to adjourn. Adopted 3-0 with concurrence of the Parent Representative. Meeting adjourned at 7:25PM.