

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting
March 28, 2017

Attending: Malik Evans (Chair); Commissioners Elliott, White and Hallmark

Parent Representative: Toyin Anderson

District Staff: Superintendent Barbara Deane-Williams; Annmarie Lehner, Director of Information Management & Technology; Nathan Dederick, Information Management & Technology; Sandra Simpson, Executive Director of Specialized Services; Theresa Root, Special Education Zone Director; Rob Ulliman, Planning Director; Dr. Ray Giamartino, Chief of Accountability.

Community Members: Don Pryor and Mark Hare, Great Schools for All

Board Staff: Debra Flanagan

Commissioner Evans called the meeting to order at 6:26PM.

I. Review Minutes of the January 19, 2017 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Elliott to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2017 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Hallmark. **Adopted 3-0.**

II. Presentation of Instructional Data to be Incorporated into School Profiles

Annmarie Lehner provided an overview of the data strategy work being performed by the Information Management & Technology Department to improve monitoring of students' progress throughout the school year. She explained that this work is proceeding in three phases:

1. School profiles: currently in production and built into the District's SPA Data Warehouse. Every principal and school chief will have ready access to a profile of their school, with building-based performance data.
2. Public posting of school profiles: the school profiles will be linked to each school's site on the District website to make this data available to parents, students, and the larger community. Each school site on the District website will contain a link to the school profile data in the Data Warehouse.

The school profile data will include information regarding:

- Attendance
- Academic performance
- School specialties (e.g. STEM, arts, expeditionary learning)

Ray Giamartino discussed the Superintendent's mission to have District staff identify each

student by face and name. He reported that the work of the Information Management & Technology Department supports this mission by enabling staff to drill down to student-specific data, performance, and other analytics.

Dr. Giamartino explained that the Student 360° profiles will allow each principal, teacher, and school chief to access a resource dashboard for every student. He noted that this component of the Data Warehouse is live, and cannot be displayed in a public forum because student confidentiality and privacy must be protected. Dr. Giamartino reported that the Student 360° profiles are highly accessible and beneficial in examining student progress.

Commissioner Evans inquired about the timing for incorporating the School Profiles into the District website. Ms. Lehner replied that the School Profiles will be publicly posted and linked to the school sites on the website within the next month. She added that her staff have been collaborating with members of the Communications Department in this effort.

3. Student Progress Trackers: Ms. Lehner reported that a great deal of time and effort has gone into considering the criteria to be used to monitor student progress at each grade level to identify students at risk. She explained that school staff currently have to drill down through a number of layers of data to obtain this information, which will be provided readily through the Student Progress Trackers according to the criteria established at each grade level. Ms. Lehner described extensive collaboration with school principals to create the specific areas of focus and the criteria to identify students in need of additional assistance. She stated that the Student Progress Trackers are currently under development, and should be available within the next few months.

Commissioner Hallmark commended the work being performed to improve monitoring of school and student progress, but noted that the data is only useful if used correctly. She asked about the way in which school chiefs use currently available School Profile data. Dr. Giamartino replied that the school chiefs conduct sessions with principals to review School Profile data, and to drill down to student-level data to track performance. He stated that the school chiefs have been promoting consistent review of data for progress monitoring, including NWEA and AIMS Web data, supplemental data regarding reading performance, writing skills rubrics, and gap closure analyses.

Commissioner Hallmark stated that she would like consideration to be given to changing the structure of leadership meetings to allow regular opportunities to discuss the ways in which data is being used and the District's overall progress toward goals.

Action Item: Board staff member Debra Flanagan will notify the Board Clerk of Commissioner Hallmark's request to consider options for changing the structure of leadership meetings to facilitate dissemination of information among Board members; allow regular opportunities to discuss ways in which data is being used and the District's progress toward goals.

III. Update on Special Education

Commissioner Evans noted that Special Education is an area of great concern in all large school districts, and Rochester is no exception. He stated that he asked Sandra Simpson, the new Executive Director of Specialized Services, to provide a presentation regarding:

- Efforts to improve the academic achievement of students with disabilities;
- Academic, social, emotional, and behavioral supports available to these students; and
- Ways to reduce the percentage of students who are classified for Special Education

Sandra Simpson reported that the District is currently in a transition with respect to Special Education, which has been closely examined and scrutinized for many years. She stated that the Specialized Services Department has been collaborating with a nationally renowned consultant, Judy Elliott, to identify options for improvement. Ms. Simpson noted that the primary focus has been on quality instruction in the classroom and collaboration among the various educational and service providers.

Ms. Simpson reviewed graduation rate data for general education students and students in Special Education for the 2008 through 2012 cohorts. She stated that progress has clearly been made over the last four years, but much more remains to be accomplished:

	Cohort Graduation Rates	
	<u>2008:</u>	<u>2012:</u>
General Education students:	55.1%	58.8%
Special Education students:	18.7%	32.2%

Ms. Simpson reported that improvement efforts are focused on attaining three main goals, which are required under the RCSD plan that was approved by the NYS Education Department:

- 1) Expand the continuum of services offered to students with disabilities
- 2) Utilize a centralized, highly trained Committee on Special Education (CSE) to review initial referrals and referrals for more restrictive placements. The use of a centralized CSE is to provide greater consistency in making Special Education eligibility determinations and to ensure development of high quality Individualized Education Plans (IEP). In addition, students with disabilities are to participate in the general education curriculum to the greatest extent possible.
- 3) Expand Career & Technical Education (CTE) offerings for students with disabilities.

With respect to the continuum of services, Ms. Simpson pointed out that many schools currently have Consultant Teachers and Resource Rooms, which are not necessarily being used to their full capacity. She also emphasized the importance of school staff focusing on preventive measures and supports (e.g. Referral to Intervention) before initiating a referral for Special Education.

Ms. Simpson stated that the intent in utilizing a highly trained centralized Committee on Special Education (CSE) is to improve the quality of Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and ensure that each plan is customized to the needs of the student. She added that CSE meetings will continue to take place in the schools to maximize accessibility for parents and teachers.

In expanding CTE options for students with disabilities, Ms. Simpson noted that the main

consideration is for the “portability” of programs, which would allow the program to be provided in any school that the student attends and thereby maximizes accessibility for all students with disabilities.

Improving Academic Achievement:

Ms. Simpson discussed efforts to improve academic achievement for students with disabilities:

- Coaching to demonstrate high-quality instructional practices to teachers;
- Providing time for teachers to meet, exchange ideas, reflect and analyze the elements of their practice that have and have not been successful;
- Integrating Special Education teachers into the team of General Education teachers in each school to enable them to share their expertise;
- Providing considerable professional development for the Coordinating Administrators of Special Education (CASE) workers and Special Education teachers to ensure coordination of services for students and maximizing available resources (e.g. NYS Special Education School Improvement Specialists).

Academic, Social, Emotional and Behavioral Supports:

Ms. Simpson pointed out that the RCSD Specialized Services Department provides a wide range of services to students with disabilities in District schools, charter schools and private schools (when requested). She emphasized that teamwork, service coordination and customization are essential to ensure that individual student’s needs are met in light of the wide range of supports and specialized professionals involved (e.g. Special Education teachers, Counselors, Behavior Specialists, Speech Pathologists, Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, etc.).

Ms. Simpson discussed a number of different types of teams within the District that provide additional specialized support:

- MATCH Teams: conduct assessments of the physical environment to improve students’ access and ability to function independently. Ms. Simpson reported that these assessments are not limited to the school facility, but can also be performed in the home to remove or minimize barriers.
- Behavior Support Teams
- Autism Team
- Special Education School Improvement Specialists

In addition, Ms. Simpson pointed out that the District’s partnerships have also been instrumental in supporting students with disabilities, such as the partnership with Hillside to provide behavioral support to students in the NorthSTAR program and in the day treatment program at Clara Barton School No. 2.

Ms. Simpson noted that the Superintendent’s Rapid Response Teams will offer the highest level of

support for emergency intervention after other efforts have been tried. The members of the Rapid Response teams will have special expertise to intervene and collaborate with teachers to reach a successful resolution.

Reducing the Percentage of Students Classified for Special Education:

Theresa Root presented 2015-16 data comparing the percentage of students classified for Special Education in each of the large urban districts in New York State:

Rochester: 17.48%

Buffalo: 18.3%

New York City: 16.62%

Syracuse: 17.43%

Albany: 10.01%

State-wide: 14.7%

Although the classification rate is similar in each of the large urban districts in the state, Ms. Root noted the significantly lower rate in the smaller Albany School District. She stated that District staff plan to examine practices in Albany and other model districts that have significantly lower percentages of students who have been classified for Special Education.

Ms. Root reviewed data for 2011-12 through 2015-16 regarding referrals to Special Education. She pointed out that referrals have increased significantly since 2013-14, but the number of students receiving Special Education services has remained fairly steady. She observed that the increase in referrals coincided with de-centralizing the Committee on Special Education (CSE) and making initial eligibility determinations at the school level. Ms. Root stated that initial referrals and eligibility determinations will now be made by a centralized team to provide greater consistency.

Ms. Simpson added that further recommendations for improving Special Education are forthcoming, and current work is focusing on prioritizing among the recommendations for the 2017-18 school year.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the definition of speech and language impairments. Ms. Simpson replied that the definitions are based on a set of established criteria and guidelines for providing services, depending on the type of impairment and degree of severity. She stated that speech and language impairments encompass a large range of potential problems, from auditory processing to articulation and receptive language.

Commissioner Elliott questioned whether the criteria refer to biological or cultural factors in language development. Ms. Simpson responded that she has not heard of speech or language impairment discussed in terms of biology or culture, although exposure to language affects development and language acquisition.

Commissioner Elliott clarified that children are expected to have a certain minimum vocabulary to be considered ready for school, and she asked whether a limited vocabulary would be considered a speech or language impairment. Ms. Simpson replied that this would not be considered an impairment, as the extent of a child's vocabulary reflects early literacy rather than speech and language development.

Commissioner Evans inquired about opportunities for de-classifying students from Special Education into the general education population. He noted that the issue of African American males being over-classified for Special Education is a serious problem, presenting a stigma that tends to follow them throughout their academic career. Ms. Simpson replied that addressing the over-classification issue depends on prevention, utilizing every resource and support to assist students *before* referring them for Special Education.

Commissioner Evans discussed the importance of identifying students with learning disabilities and providing the specific supports necessary to enable them to participate in the general education curriculum. Ms. Simpson replied that the District needs to create more opportunities for students with disabilities to be included as much as possible in the general education curriculum.

Commissioner Evans contended that the District has focused on complying with mandates at the expense of instruction and academics. He also pointed out that the District's overall graduation rate cannot increase without raising the graduation rate for students with disabilities.

Commissioner White referred to a number of past studies and reports performed that have generated recommendations for improving Special Education in the District, but have largely been ignored. He asked how the current recommendations will yield different results. Ms. Simpson responded that District staff know how to engage students in ways that promote their success (e.g. through CTE and project-based learning). She discussed the Superintendent's leadership and focus on instruction, professional development and intervention at a granular level, and the opportunity to deploy teams from Central Office into the schools. Ms. Simpson acknowledged that the current work of the Special Education Department is informed by the work of her predecessors.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the way in which the Committee on Special Education carries out its work in actual practice, noting that it can be intimidating for parents to be surrounded and outnumbered by professionals. She cited an example of a CSE meeting she attended with a parent, in which the parent's explicit concerns and requests were disregarded and overridden by the professionals. Commissioner Elliott emphasized the need for parents to be empowered in advocating for their child in this process.

Commissioner Elliott asked about a specific goal for reducing the number of referrals for Special Education in the District in the future.

Parent Representative Toyin Anderson reported that parents have experienced a great deal of frustration with the CSE process, particularly in having meaningful input into decision-making. She expressed concern about the recommendations being implemented with fidelity, noting that the consequences of decisions and practices always fall on the children. Ms. Simpson responded that the new Ombudsman position that has been created in the District has been effective in facilitating the CSE process by advocating for students and parents.

Commissioner Evans noted that redesign of Special Education is a complex topic, and he encouraged those present to share information and challenges with members of the community to raise awareness.

IV. 2nd Marking Period Credit and Regents Accumulation

Amy Schiavi compared data for the 2012 cohort (graduated in June 2016) and 2013 cohort (to graduate in June 2017) to evaluate District progress and discuss the way in which projections are determined. She presented scenarios of the “best case” projections, estimated graduation rate, and the most likely rate for each of the cohorts as of March 28th for each school year:

	<u>2012 Cohort</u>	<u>2013 Cohort</u>
<u>Best case:</u>		
Students with at least 16 credits as of January:	55.4%	58.6%
<u>Estimated:</u>		
Students with at least 16 credits and And passed at least 3 Regents exams:	47.9%	49.7%
<u>Probable:</u>		
Students with at least 17 credits and Passed at least 3 Regents exams:	45.5%	47.2%

Actual Graduation Rate:

June 2016:	47.5%	
August 2016:	53.0%	
Drop-Out Rate:	24.2%	17.7%

Ms. Schiavi pointed out that the actual graduation rate in June 2016 was 2% higher than the most probable rate that had been calculated in March 2016, indicating a high degree of accuracy in the metrics used to predict RCSD graduation rates.

Commissioner Elliott inquired when District staff begin estimating graduation rates. Ms. Schiavi replied that this process begins in 9th grade to enable early identification and intervention for students who need additional assistance in meeting graduation requirements. Ray Giamartino added that there has also been an emphasis on ensuring that every 8th grade student enters 9th grade with at least one earned credit to facilitate their progress toward graduation.

Commissioner White asked whether the data presented include East High School students. Ms. Schiavi confirmed that these students are included in the data.

Commissioner Elliott asked when District staff begin gathering, compiling and analyzing student data to project graduation rates. Ms. Schiavi responded that this process is typically performed during the summer in preparation for the following school year.

Ms. Schiavi announced that the most probable graduation rate for June 2017 was estimated at 41.9% after the first marking period of the 2016-17 school year. She explained that this rate was based on the percentage of students in the 2013 cohort who had earned at least 17 credits and passed at least 1 Regents exam. By focusing on the January Regents exams and credit attainment, this rate increased to 47.2% after the second marking period. The 6% increase from the first to the second marking period represents an additional 116 students likely to graduate in June 2017.

Ms. Schiavi acknowledged that the data is based on one snapshot in time, but pointed out that there have been consistent gains from the first to the second marking period of each school year. She stated that the positive results are due to monitoring students closely, identifying those in need of assistance, and providing the supports necessary for greater numbers of students to meet graduation requirements.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the number of students in the 2013 cohort. Ms. Schiavi responded that a total of 2196 students were enrolled in 9th grade in RCSD in 2013, and 1716 of those students are still enrolled in the District at this point.

Commissioner White pointed out that not all of the students enrolled in the District in 9th grade in 2013 are currently enrolled. He asked about the maximum graduation rate that could be attained if all of the currently enrolled students in the 2013 cohort (i.e. 1716) graduated in June 2017. Ms. Schiavi replied that if all currently enrolled students in the 2013 cohort graduated this June, this would yield a graduation rate of 82%.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the way in which student data is disseminated and utilized at the school level. Rob Ulliman explained that the data in the Student Data Profile is provided to schools at the beginning of the year and on a quarterly basis. He stated that this data is also contained in the digital data notebook, which is accessible to each school principal.

Ms. Schiavi reviewed data regarding the dropout rate for each cohort from 2006 through 2012 for each student subgroup (i.e. by race, ethnicity, disability status, English-Language learners, and economically disadvantaged students).

Commissioner Elliott commented on the increase in the dropout rate for Asian students, from 14.9% in the 2006 cohort to 22.0% in the 2012 cohort.

Commissioner Hallmark pointed out that the dropout rate for Asian students has fallen for each of the last three cohorts (i.e. from a high of 29.8% for the 2010 cohort to 25.0% for the 2011 cohort to 22.0% for the 2012 cohort).

Commissioner Evans cautioned that the actual numbers of students should be examined in addition to the percentages because relatively small numbers of students could create misleading statistics.

Commissioner Elliott asked about the significant increase in the dropout rate among white students in the District, particularly within the last year (i.e. from 17.8% for the 2011 cohort to 26.9% for the 2012 cohort). Ms. Schiavi replied that this is the largest spike in the District's dropout rate.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the dropout rate for students with limited English proficiency.

Dr. Giamartino noted that some of these students have either gone to another school district or returned to Puerto Rico for a period of time, which has affected their engagement with school and willingness to return. Superintendent Deane-Williams noted that to the extent that Limited English Proficient students leave the District for a period of time, there is an impact on attendance, engagement, credit accrual, and test performance. She suggested using early warning indicators to identify potential dropouts in 6th and 7th grade to engage these students in programs to reduce dropout rates. Dr. Giamartino noted that staff are focusing daily on attendance rates, tracking student disciplinary referrals and supports for Limited English Proficient students. The Superintendent proposed that the senior team conduct an after-action analysis of every student who drops out, and asked whether staff have the information and capacity to implement this proposal. Dr. Giamartino confirmed that this data can be provided to the members of the senior team for analysis.

Commissioner Elliott asked whether the students returning to Puerto Rico would be counted as “Hispanic” or of “limited English proficiency” in the dropout rate data. Dr. Giamartino responded that these students could be counted in both of these categories.

Commissioner White inquired where the greatest opportunity lies in maximizing the graduation rate at this point, and where resources should be invested to have the greatest impact on student achievement. Ms. Schiavi pointed out that school chiefs have been working with principals to identify students who are just shy of meeting graduation requirements and developing interventions to promote their success. She stated that considerable effort has also been focused on Edison High School and East High School as the largest secondary schools in the District, which therefore have the most opportunity to affect the overall graduation rate.

Commissioner Elliott noted that another strategy would be to focus on the students who scored just below the passing rate on the Regents exams (i.e. obtained a score of 55-64) and offering support to assist in improving their test scores. She pointed out that the District needs to promote a score indicative of readiness for college (i.e. a score of at least 85). Commissioner Elliott emphasized the importance of communicating this information to students and parents. Ms. Schiavi noted that student progress data is reviewed with secondary school principals after every monthly principals’ meeting, with discussion of the measures to be taken to help each student advance.

Ms. Schiavi discussed credit acceleration toward graduation, which has been a major focus over the last two years. In 2014-15, students recovered a total of 250 credits during the entire school year. For 2016-17, students have obtained a total of 250 credits and another 140 accelerated credits. Ms. Schiavi reported that staff have been examining a variety of opportunities for students to earn credits.

In addition, staff have been examining options for assisting students who struggle with the Regents exams. Ms. Schiavi discussed the use of the Skills USA exam as a substitute for one Regents exam for these struggling students. She reported that the Skills USA exam includes college and career skills, and can be taken any number of times. She stated that District staff have identified the specific types of students who could qualify and benefit from taking the Skills USA exam. Ms. Schiavi noted that testing protocols have been developed and teachers have been provided to assist these students in preparing for this exam.

Commissioner Elliott recalled past issues with students passing the Global History Regents exam because the exam was only offered in the summer. She stated that this resulted from a systems issue,

rather than students' inability to perform the work. Commissioner Elliott asserted that students need to be encouraged to take coursework in Global History because they will be working in a global economy and this knowledge/understanding will be critical for their future.

Commissioner White pointed out that students must pass five Regents exams to graduate, but a Career & Technical Education (CTE) course can substitute for one of the exams. He requested the following data:

- CTE courses offered in 2014-15 compared to those offered in 2016-17;
- Number of students who passed through the CTE course pathway in 2014-15, as compared to 2016-17;
- A list of the number of CTE options offered in the District, identifying the options that are certified by New York State

Action Item: Data will be provided to the members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee for 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 regarding:

- 1. The specific CTE courses offered by the District in each school year, identifying the courses that were state-certified in each year;**
- 2. The number of students in each school year who substituted a CTE course pathway for one of the Regents exams to meet graduation requirements**

Commissioner White emphasized the importance of principals being aware of the urgency in taking action to maximize the number of students graduating.

Commissioner Elliott discussed the need for a media strategy to highlight the importance of preparing and passing Regents exams, particularly for students who have scored in the 55-64 range (i.e. just below a passing score). She stated that the District also needs to ensure that students who are over-age and have an excess number of credits beyond those required to graduate are not retained in school.

V. Socioeconomic Integration in Schools

Commissioner Evans explained that he invited Don Pryor and Mark Hare to this evening's meeting to discuss the work of Great Schools for All. He pointed out that past efforts to promote socioeconomic diversity in schools have centered on creating a county-wide school system, which is not politically feasible. Commissioner Evans asserted that other alternatives could be used to promote socioeconomic integration, which has been the focus of Great Schools for All.

Mr. Hare provided background information about Great Schools for All, noting that this citizens group formed approximately 3 ½ years ago to address concerns about the concentration of poverty in city schools. He stated that the group is comprised of city and suburban parents, educators, advocates/activists, and college professors. Mr. Hare reported that Great Schools for All has reviewed a great deal of research regarding the educational impact of concentrated poverty, which has consistently indicated poor outcomes for students.

Mr. Hare described an idea for inter-district magnet schools to promote greater socioeconomic integration. He reported that Great Schools for All commissioned a survey last year of city and

suburban parents to gauge the level of support for this option, and the response was quite favorable. Mr. Hare noted that the proposed inter-district magnet schools would be open to all students in Monroe County, with 50% from low income families. He stated that the magnet schools could be based on any number of models/themes (e.g. language immersion, technology, leadership academies). Mr. Hare discussed a number of possible governance models for these schools, such as a single district, partnership of districts, partnership with a college/university, or through an educational partnership organization. He added that each magnet school would need a diverse faculty and to ensure inclusion of all students.

Mr. Hare noted that existing BOCES legislation or the Urban-Suburban program platform could be modified to allow for the creation of inter-district magnet schools, which made this a more viable option than other alternatives. He added that socioeconomic diversity within a school has been shown to result in improved academic performance and higher graduation rates for all students, which has been demonstrated in communities throughout the country. Mr. Hare emphasized that the intent of Great Schools for All is to focus on ways to improve education and life prospects for children who are most disadvantaged and at risk in the Rochester community.

Don Pryor noted that a letter was submitted to the Rochester Board of Education on March 10, 2017 by Great Schools for All, in which the group discussed the importance of building on the national research indicating the benefits of socioeconomic diversity in schools. He asserted that the parent survey and discussions with leaders in local school districts reflect a growing constituency in Rochester interested in examining options for fostering socioeconomic diversity through inter-district magnet schools.

Mr. Pryor reported that the two BOCES superintendents and superintendents from approximately six local suburban school districts are interested in collaborating to explore these options further, but only if the Rochester City School District will partner with them in this effort. He stated that Superintendent Deane-Williams has expressed support for participating in this effort, but noted that Board approval is needed to ensure the necessary internal support for exploring these options in addition to all of the other initiatives currently under way in the District. Mr. Pryor assured Committee members that participation in this exploration will not in any way interfere with the crucial efforts already under way in the District. He emphasized the importance of pursuing these discussions in tandem with internal District efforts to maximize opportunities to elevate student achievement.

Mr. Pryor clarified that Great Schools for All is requesting a resolution of Board support that would direct the Superintendent to empower or designate a senior official to enter into conversation with suburban districts to explore the potential for developing one or more inter-district magnet schools to foster socioeconomic diversity. He emphasized that the only commitment on the part of the Rochester City School District is to discuss this option with representatives from local suburban school districts.

Mr. Pryor highlighted some of the key considerations to be examined through this collaboration:

- What barriers currently exist to creating inter-district magnet schools?
- What opportunities are there to build upon existing schools and school district partnerships?
- Identify specific changes needed in law/regulations to address barriers
- Develop a specific model/plan for Rochester

Mr. Pryor reported that Great Schools for All is prepared to offer support in this collaborative exploration, including the assistance of a consultant to help with the details of the proposal. He added that the Farash Foundation has expressed interest and has offered staff support for this initiative. Mr. Pryor clarified that Great Schools for All is prepared to offer assistance with planning, development, and fundraising, as needed and requested by the participants in this initiative.

Commissioner Evans commended Great Schools for All for their efforts, noting that all ideas are needed to address the problems of severe poverty in Rochester. He stated that he would like to create a draft resolution in consultation with the Board President and the members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee. Commissioner Evans explained that if Board members are amenable to proceeding with this initiative, discussions would be held with the Superintendent prior to formal presentation for vetting by the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee and to the full Board for a vote on the resolution.

Commissioner Hallmark stated that she is reluctant to proceed with this initiative because of the timing. She noted that the Superintendent is already engaged in intensive efforts to reform the District at this point, including redesign of Special Education, data systems to improve tracking of student progress and instruction, facilities capacity and utilization assessment, and neighborhood and zone analysis. Commissioner Hallmark expressed support for continuing the discussion of options to promote socioeconomic diversity in schools, but not for directing the Superintendent to take on additional initiatives at this time. Mr. Pryor acknowledged the critical efforts being undertaken within the District, and asked when the timing will be right to participate in these discussions.

Commissioner Hallmark asserted that the initiatives currently being pursued within the Rochester City School District will lead to significant improvements. She suggested that participating in discussions regarding socioeconomic diversity may be more opportune after the results of the current initiatives in the District have become apparent, perhaps in a year or so.

Mr. Pryor pointed out that waiting another year or longer creates a risk of losing the momentum and interest on the part of suburban districts. He emphasized that the Superintendent herself does not have to participate in the discussions, but could designate a trusted member of her team to explore options with her suburban counterparts. Mr. Pryor also suggested that the more extensive work potentially involved after exploring these options could be postponed a bit, but at least the initial conversations could proceed at this point. He expressed the hope of finding a compromise that respects the timing and workload of the Superintendent and also allows discussion and exploration of options to proceed.

Commissioner Elliott concurred with Commissioner Hallmark, pointing out that researchers typically fail to understand that education is a motivating force for children of color to overcome poverty. She asserted that the issue is that systems have failed children of color who are in poverty, rather than these children's inability to learn. Commissioner Elliott stated that she cannot support initiatives based on the inherently insulting premise that African American and Hispanic children need to be surrounded by white children to perform better in school. She stated that she also takes issue with initiatives promoting diversity because this often leads to African American and Hispanic children losing a sense of their cultural identity.

Commissioner Elliott questioned the source of the research regarding socioeconomic integration and the extent to which this idea has been supported by African American scholars. She inquired about the

familiarity of the members of Great Schools for All with the work of a number of African American scholars in education (e.g. Janice Hale, Dr. Janwanza Kunjufu).

Commissioner Elliott also pointed out that funding follows the student, which would pose a loss to the Rochester City School District to the extent that students attended magnet schools in other districts. She noted that the District is already facing a substantial budget deficit.

Commissioner White observed that the research cited by Great Schools for All is not based on race, but on socioeconomic status and integration. He asserted that numerous studies have examined the impact of concentrated poverty in schools, and the research is indisputable in showing that socioeconomic diversity improves educational outcomes for students. Commissioner White stated that nothing in this research suggests that individuals have to give up their cultural identity, or that the presence of white children is necessary for black children to perform better academically. He emphasized that the Committee is simply being asked to agree to proceed with a conversation.

Commissioner White acknowledged that the Superintendent is dealing with major efforts within the District at this point, but noted that one individual cannot be relied upon exclusively to fix the District's problems. He emphasized the importance of working collaboratively as a community to attain real and sustainable transformation.

Commissioner Hallmark expressed concern that a great deal of the language in studies of integration tend to focus on the deficits of children of color. She contended that the true benefits of integration are in educating white people, noting that educational literature frequently refers to "achievement gaps" among children of color but not of "awareness gaps" on the part of white people. Commissioner Hallmark stated that examining integration from a deficit model is not useful in addressing the real issues.

Commissioner White declared that the Rochester City School District cannot take on the problems of concentrated poverty alone. He stated that there is no reason not to engage in discussions with other school districts while work is being done on systemic issues in the District.

Commissioner Elliott commented that she would be more willing to pursue conversations with other school districts if it was clear that other major initiatives pursued in the District (i.e. the East High School educational partnership) have been effective in improving student achievement. She stated that she does not want the District to become involved in additional programs until results have been obtained for the initiatives that have already been pursued. She stated that the proposal that has been presented does not seem substantially different from the existing Urban – Suburban program. Commissioner Elliott also questioned whether this proposal would be in the best interests of children of color.

Commissioner White contended that the Urban – Suburban program is a drain of the most talented students in the District, regardless of race or socioeconomic status. He noted that creation of inter-district magnet schools has the potential to draw students into the Rochester City School District, particularly by building on the strengths within the District.

With the new Trump Administration and U.S Education Secretary, Commissioner White contended that the Board does not have the luxury of time to wait to explore ideas and options that have the

potential to improve student achievement.

Commissioner Hallmark responded to the concern about delaying discussion and losing momentum, requesting the following information from the representatives of Great Schools for All:

1. Research by a black scholar that demonstrates the benefits of socioeconomic integration in schools; and
2. Examples of cross-district socioeconomic integration that have been successful.

Meeting adjourned at 8:53PM.