

EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WHOLE

June 12, 2018

Attending: Commissioner Sheppard (Chair); Commissioners Elliott, Hallmark, Powell, and Funchess (arrived 5:46PM).

Parent Representative: Toyin Anderson

District Staff: Dr. Giamartino, Chief of Accountability; Rob Ulliman, Planning Director; Dr. Guillory, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching & Learning; Toyia Wilson, School Chief; Dr. Mascitti-Miller, Chief of School Innovation.

District Student: Joshua Lowe, student at the Leadership Academy for Young Men

Board Staff: Debra Flanagan

Commissioner Sheppard convened the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting of the Whole at 5:35PM.

I. Review Minutes of May 10, 2018 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting of the Whole

Motion by Commissioner Hallmark to approve the minutes of the May 10, 2018 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting of the Whole. Seconded by Commissioner Elliott. **Adopted 4-0.**

II. Student Presentation: Creation of ROC Youth Community Engagement Organization

A freshman at the Leadership Academy for Young Men, Joshua Lowe, described his collaboration with peers to create the ROC Youth Community Engagement Organization four months ago. He explained that the organization is designed to bring together youth in the community for empowerment and civic engagement as future leaders and citizens. In addition, ROC Youth Community Engagement will offer positive opportunities for youth to explore a variety of interests to counteract many toxic influences in their environment. Mr. Lowe reported that the organization is currently applying for 501-c3 status, will be recruiting volunteers in the next few weeks, and is considering a site downtown or in a City Recreation Center. He explained that the most pressing needs at this point for ROC Youth Community Engagement are funding and publicity.

Commissioner Sheppard offered support for ROC Youth Community Engagement through connections with local leaders and the media, encouraging her colleagues to also provide assistance to this fledgling organization.

III. Review of Third Quarter Reports regarding Student Academic Progress and 2017-18 Graduation Rates

Dr. Giamartino stated that this evening's presentation will provide an update regarding credit accumulation and the passing rate for Regents exams as of the end of the third marking period. The presentation will also respond to Action Items from last month's meeting regarding supports offered to students to help them advance toward graduation, and identification of students who have repeatedly taken the same Regents exam. He cautioned that the data for the 2014 cohort fluctuates daily with changes in student enrollment (e.g., drops, transfers).

Dr. Giamartino presented data of the number of students in the entire 2014 cohort, with a breakdown of the number and percentage still enrolled, recognized as having dropped out, or having graduated early. Further detail was provided for each student subgroup in the cohort. Dr. Giamartino discussed the high dropout rates for students with disabilities (22.6%) and English-language learners (34.6%).

In terms of students' progress toward graduation, Dr. Giamartino pointed out that 58.6% have earned at least 16 credits, 55.3% have passed at least three Regents exams, and 50.4% have met both of these requirements as of the end of the third marking period (April 23, 2018). Rob Ulliman explained that the data include students with disabilities who obtained a low pass score on Regents exams, and students eligible for the safety net under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Dr. Giamartino reported that 17.1% (352 students) have already dropped out of the 2014 cohort, which reduces the maximum potential graduation rate to 82.9%.

Commissioner Hallmark inquired about the potential for students who have earned the required number of credits to graduate in August. Dr. Giamartino replied that additional support provided to these students over the summer often leads many to graduate in August. He added that the June and August graduation rates for the 2014 cohort will increase to the extent that students attain passing compensatory scores or successfully appeal Regents exam scores.

Dr. Giamartino compared the percentage of students with at least 16 credits by the end of the third marking period in 2016-17 to 2017-18, noting that slightly fewer students met this requirement this year than last year (58.6% v. 61.1%). Similarly, the percentage of students who had passed at least three Regents exams is lower this year (55.3%) compared to the same time last year (56.4%). However, the percentage of students meeting both of these requirements was slightly higher this year (50.4%) than last year (49.9%). Dr. Giamartino reported that a greater percentage of students in the cohort are still enrolled as of the end of the third marking period this year, as compared to last year (+1.4%). He also noted a slight increase in the percentage of students graduating early this year compared to last year (+0.4%).

Commissioner Elliott requested that future quarterly reports include data of the percentage of students who have scored at least 85% on the Regents exams because this threshold indicates readiness for college and/or career.

ACTION ITEM: Future quarterly academic reports will include the percentage of students in each cohort who have scored at or above 85% on Regents exams to reflect readiness for college and/or career.

Commissioner Hallmark inquired about the possible reasons for the decline this year in the percentage of students meeting **either** of the minimum requirements of earning at least 16 credits or passing at least three Regents exams, while the percentage of students who met **both** requirements increased over the last year. Mr. Ulliman responded that this may be due to significant fluctuations in the number of students in the 2014 cohort.

Commissioner Elliott emphasized the importance of data analysis to identify the specific factors leading to a reduction in the percentage of students meeting either the minimum credit or Regents exam requirements. She asserted that knowledge of the specific factors influencing the results is essential in enabling effective action to be taken. Dr. Giamartino responded that the data is shared with each school to develop effective interventions and supports.

Commissioner Funchess questioned the terminology in the presentation regarding “recognizing” students as dropouts, pointing out that the dropout rate decreased from last year. She asked whether the apparent reduction in dropouts this year may be due to a change in the definition or in the method used to classify students as dropping out. Mr. Ulliman replied that changes have not been made in the definition or methodology over the last year, but the terminology reflects the various ways in which the State considers a student to have dropped out. He reported that students who leave school, but go on to obtain a GED/TASC certificate are considered “drop outs” by the NYS Education Department.

Commissioner Funchess commented that there is a fundamental difference between students who decide to leave school and stop their education altogether, compared to those who decide to pursue a GED/TASC certification. She emphasized the importance of knowing the specific circumstances surrounding each student considered to have “dropped out” to distinguish between very different groups of students and their potential opportunities for the future. Mr. Ulliman noted that data regarding the different groups of students recognized as “dropouts” is provided on the previous slide in the presentation:

- Reached maximum age: 0.05%
- Pursued GED/TASC certification: 3.2%
- Dropped out: 13.8%

Toya Wilson offered to provide additional detail regarding homelessness and other factors affecting student enrollment for the 2014 cohort at this point.

ACTION ITEM: Additional detail will be provided to Board members of the circumstances, number and percentage of students in each “dropout” category.

Commissioner Sheppard noted that the issue of considering students who have earned a GED/TASC certificate as “dropouts” was discussed in a previous Board meeting. She suggested referring this issue to the Community & Intergovernmental Relations Committee for advocacy at the state level.

As an example of District outreach efforts to encourage students to continue their education, Mr. Ulliman reported that the principal of All City High School is provided with a report after each marking period of all active and inactive students in the District aged 17-21 to identify opportunities for their re-enrollment.

Commissioner Sheppard asked about the staff member(s) responsible for following up on the data provided to schools regarding student progress toward graduation. She questioned the ability of guidance counselors to provide this type of support when responsible for large caseloads.

Commissioner Funchess inquired about mechanisms in the District that enable students and families to track academic progress and identify specific gaps/needs toward graduation. She inquired about ways to empower families and students to ensure that they are on track to attain the necessary courses, credits, and other credentials toward graduation. Dr. Giamartino replied that the District is re-launching RCSDLink to enable parents to enter their child's name and track their academic progress, identify the specific requirements that need to be fulfilled, and provide a graduation plan. He demonstrated the features of RCSDLink, a smart phone application available to students and parents to monitor academic progress.

Commissioner Sheppard asked about plans to provide computer access to parents in schools, and to create a link on the District website for those without a smart phone. Dr. Giamartino responded that RCSDLink is accessible through a computer for those parents who do not have access to a smart phone.

Commissioner Sheppard inquired about the number of parents using RCSDLink. Dr. Giamartino reported that just over 2000 families are actively using this smart phone application at this point.

Commissioner Funchess noted that there are a number of models in the community (e.g., Ready Rosie) that could be used to encourage parents to utilize RCSDLink.

Toyin Anderson pointed out that while 2000 parents may not seem like a very large number, they may have multiple children enrolled in District schools.

Dr. Giamartino noted that RCSDLink provides a great deal of information such as grades, class assignments, attendance, and links to District officials. He added that parents can request notifications linked to Food Service, Transportation, and the Code of Conduct. He also acknowledged that more work must be done to advertise and notify parents of this resource.

Commissioner Funchess observed that the literature regarding RCSDLink focuses on news, information, and student behavior, rather than monitoring academic progress. She contended that this reflects the prevailing culture in the District in emphasizing student behavioral issues over academic potential. Commissioner Funchess urged District staff to change this focus in the literature and in all marketing campaigns to promote change in the attitudes and approach to students.

Dr. Giamartino presented data showing the gap between projected graduation rates and the School Comprehensive Improvement Plan (SCIP) goal for each RCSD school. These gaps were largest for Integrated Arts & Technology High School, Monroe High School, and Northeast College Preparatory High School. Mr. Ulliman stated that the final slide provides a breakdown for each student subgroup by Regents subject area and accountability subgroup.

Commissioner Sheppard observed that students have had a great deal of difficulty with the U.S. History and Global History Regents exams, but the District tends to focus more on Math and Science. She asked whether the Administration has proposed supports for students in U.S. History and Global History. Ms. Wilson replied that providing student support to improve academic progress is the responsibility of the

School Chiefs, who are in schools at least three days per week and develop school-specific and district-wide interventions.

Commissioner Elliott asked whether the District has a sufficient number of teachers certified in U.S. History and Global History to provide instruction in these subjects. Dr. Giamartino replied that the Human Capital Initiatives (HCI) Department reports quarterly on the number of teachers providing instruction outside of their area of certification. He explained that assigning teachers to a subject outside of their area of certification is done to cover classroom needs, and HCI attempts to rectify teaching assignments as soon as possible.

Commissioner Elliott stressed the importance of information about the specific courses being taught by teachers who are not certified in the subject because of the impact on students' learning.

Commissioner Funchess pointed out that the Regents exams with the most repeated attempts are ELA, Algebra I, and the Living Environment, yet students seem to struggle a great deal with U.S. History and Global History. Dr. Giamartino responded that U.S. History and Global History tend to be "gatekeepers" in keeping students from graduating. He explained that this does not necessarily equate to students taking these exams multiple times.

Commissioner Funchess questioned the District's rationale for conducting the U.S. History Regents exam in 11th grade, when the content is taught in grades 4, 6 and 7. She pointed out that this approach creates barriers to success by requiring students to recall material from at least four years ago. Ms. Wilson acknowledged that this approach has been disadvantageous, and reported that many schools have begun offering the U.S. History Regents exam in 8th or 9th grade.

Commissioner Elliott suggested that the members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee review copies of recent Global History and U.S. History exams to understand more about the expectations of students, and determine the need for advocacy at the state level. She recalled that Global History courses were only offered during the summer in the past, which compounded students' difficulties in earning these credits and preparing for the exam. Ms. Wilson stated that Global History is now offered during the school year, but the timing depends on the course sequencing at the school.

Commissioner Elliott asserted that Board members need to understand the extent to which students' struggles with Global History are due to the course content, the way in which instruction is presented, or the difficulty of the items on the exam. She stated that the Board needs to discern the extent to which students' difficulties on these exams are due to factors at the district or state level. Ms. Wilson reported that New York is beginning to transition to a different exam in Global History, as evidenced by a new test being administered to students on June 5th to establish new test norms. She added that Global History is typically a two-year course, and the state is planning to test students at the end of each year.

Commissioner Powell pointed out that some schools have double-blocks of Global History to cover the subject in one school year. She asked about the number of schools that have adopted this approach, and whether significantly more students successfully pass the Regents exam when they have had double blocks in Global History for one school year.

Commissioner Sheppard discussed the importance of cultural relevance in U.S. History and of the inclusion of pan-African studies in Global History. She requested that Board members be notified of

District meetings regarding these Regents exams to allow information to be gathered to support advocacy at the state level.

ACTION ITEM: Copies of recent Global History Regents exams will be provided to Board members for review in an upcoming Excellence in Student Achievement Committee meeting.

Ms. Wilson reported that District teachers actually take the Global History exam to align course content with exam expectations.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the degree of variation in Regents Global History exams from year to year. Dr. Giamartino replied that the weight assigned to various aspects of the material varies from year to year, and an item analysis is performed to examine students' performance in specific topics or eras in history. He noted that a consistent pattern is found in students' responses, based on the teacher and the extent to which the material was covered.

Commissioner Elliott observed that this level of analysis is crucial in providing targeted support to teachers and in holding them accountable. She pointed out that School Chiefs have a critical role in providing in-depth analysis and feedback to enable teachers to modify their instruction. Dr. Giamartino clarified that the academic content executive directors collaborate closely with the Office of Accountability in this analysis and in providing direct feedback to schools.

Commissioner Funchess observed that this type of data analysis can offer opportunities for collegial learning among Global History teachers, and asked whether team teaching could be considered. She pointed out that each teacher could teach the particular topics for which they have a passion, which would also improve instructional quality. Ms. Wilson replied that this type of collegial professional development is conducted over the summer to enable teachers to exchange ideas and best practices in preparation for the new school year. She stated that team teaching is being considered, particularly in English and Social Studies. The results from this pilot will be used to consider team teaching in other subjects, such as Global History.

Commissioner Hallmark noted that while instructional quality is certainly essential, there is also an element of surprise in the Regents exams in terms of the particular content that is emphasized. For exams that have been offered for a number of years, Ms. Wilson reported that trends can be predicted with a high degree of probability in terms of the material that is highlighted. She stated that the results of this analysis are used to inform curriculum development and planning.

Commissioner Sheppard commented on Commissioner Elliott's concern about having courses taught by teachers with certification in the subject. She suggested that the District consider offering additional courses after school and at other times to enable students to learn from a teacher who is certified in the subject.

Ms. Wilson discussed the role of School Chiefs in supporting students' academic progress by meeting with principals and faculty members a minimum of once every two weeks, and monitoring student progress at least once every five weeks. She explained that progress monitoring involves meeting with students, families, and counselors to ensure that all have the same information and are collaborative in their approach to assisting the student. Ms. Wilson noted that the internal Data Dashboard is cross-referenced with NYS data to ensure that every student is tracked.

Ms. Wilson described School Chiefs' efforts to coach administrators and teachers about flexible ways to offer students opportunities for credit recovery and marking period recovery. Ms. Wilson explained that the current approach honors the work that students have already done, and focuses on the particular aspects of the course that the student did not understand. In this way, students are able to obtain needed credits much more quickly and efficiently, compared to the former method of requiring them to repeat the entire course or all of the work covered during the marking period.

Commissioner Hallmark asked when opportunities are offered to students for credit recovery. Ms. Wilson replied that opportunities are offered in a myriad of ways: online, after school, study hall, through academic intervention services, a staggered schedule, providing additional support during the school day, Saturday school, and evening sessions with teachers.

Commissioner Sheppard inquired about the cost of credit recovery and marking period recovery interventions.

Commissioner Funchess requested information about the return on investment for each of these interventions.

ACTION ITEM: Data will be provided to the Board of the cost and return on academic investment for each method of credit recovery and marking period recovery provided to students.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the actions that will be taken to close the gap between projected and SCIP target graduation rates for each school, expressing concern about the large gaps for Integrated Arts & Technology High School and Monroe High School. Ms. Wilson noted that school staff work intensively to promote credit recovery and marking period recovery, resulting in a spike at the end of the school year.

Commissioner Elliott asked whether Integrated Arts & Technology High School and Monroe High School could still conceivably reach their target graduation rates this year. Beth Mascitti-Miller replied that it is unlikely that Monroe High School will attain the SCIP graduation goal this year, but the school will meet the graduation requirement to indicate demonstrable improvement.

Commissioner Funchess questioned the way in which the SCIP graduation rate goals were established for each school. Mr. Ulliman explained that the District is required to increase the overall graduation rate by 10% this year from 56.8% to 66.8%, including August graduates. He stated that targets were established based on each school's contribution needed to realize a 10% increase in the overall District rate. Dr. Giamartino clarified that the equalization calculation used to establish target graduation rates resulted in some schools being expected to realize greater gains this year.

Dr. Mascitti-Miller pointed out that over 66% of the students at Monroe High School are English-language learners (ELL), and a disproportionate percentage of these students do not pass the Regents ELA exam. This situation automatically leads the school to be at a deficit in terms of meeting the requirement to pass a minimum of three Regents exams. Dr. Mascitti-Miller noted that students at Monroe High School tend to have a greater number of credits earned, but not of Regents exams passed.

Commissioner Funchess inquired whether the District has a mechanism in place to provide differential supports or interventions for ELL students to assist in passing the Regents exam. Ms. Wilson replied that ELL students tend to take additional courses, which supports their English language learning.

Ms. Wilson presented data showing that students at All City High School earned 92 credits from the end of the third marking period (April 23rd) to date (June 11, 2018), illustrating opportunities for further progress to be made. She also described a credit and marking period recovery program at Edison High School for 9th grade students, in which additional credits can be earned during the school year or in summer school to prevent falling behind.

Ms. Wilson asserted that the District has to enhance Response to Intervention (RtI) systems to improve monitoring of student progress and to provide early intervention. She noted that each school's team is responsible for Response to Intervention: principals, school administrators, guidance counselors, intervention teachers, support teachers, and social workers.

Toyin Anderson asked about ways in which parents are involved in the Response to Intervention and academic intervention process. Ms. Wilson replied that parents are a key partner throughout this process, noting that graduation reviews are conducted throughout the school year with students and parents. In addition, information regarding student progress is sent to parents during the year.

IV. Update on Recommendations from the REAL Team

Commissioner Sheppard requested information in writing of the recommendations of the REAL Team because no one was available to report on this agenda item in the meeting.

ACTION ITEM: Information will be provided in writing to Board members of the updated recommendations of the REAL Team.

Meeting adjourned at 7:26PM.