

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Review and Development Committee Meeting

March 10, 2016

MINUTES

Attendance

Commissioners – Commissioner Willa Powell (Chair), Commissioner Mary Adams, Commissioner Jose Cruz, Board President Van White (arrived at 5:44PM); Commissioner Elizabeth Hallmark

Parent Representative – Barb Van Kerkhove

District Liaison – Charles Johnson (General Counsel and District Liaison)

Presenters/Guests – Linda Cimusz (Interim Superintendent); Carlos Cotto (Executive Director of PE/Athletics/Health); Dr. Christiana Otuwa (Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning); Dr. Jennifer Gkourlias (Chief of Curriculum and Programs); Dr. Donna Harris (Consultant Research Analyst for Latino Affairs and Bilingual Education)

Board Staff – Mia Johnson and Shanai Lee (Board Clerk)

Commissioner Cruz called the meeting to order at 5:34PM.

I. Review Minutes of February 23, 2016 Policy Committee Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Cruz to approve the minutes of February 23, 2016 Policy Committee Meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Adopted 4-0 with concurrence from the Parent Representative.

II. New Policy Consideration: Board’s Recognition of Booster Clubs – Mr. Carlos Cotto

Mr. Carlos Cotto returned to the Committee with an updated version of the new policy for consideration regarding booster clubs. He described the following changes and additions based on the New York State School Board Association’s sample policy: contribution section, items of accountability, aligning the money component with Policy 1810: Gifts from the Public, and identifying individuals who can be a part of booster clubs.

Commissioner Powell suggested formatting changes including adding a policy number and numbering the paragraphs. Commissioner Powell asked for a motion to advance the policy to the full Board as an information item. Commissioner Cruz made the motion. It was seconded by Commissioner Hallmark. Vote 4-0 with concurrence from the Parent Representative.

III. Policy Recommendations: Policy 4350: Multicultural/Global Education – Dr. Christiana Otuwa, Dr. Jennifer Gkourlias, and Dr. Donna Harris

Dr. Gkourlias stated that two months ago she presented recommendations from the initial review and was charged by the Policy Committee to review the policy based on the need for more

specificity of language and clearer definitions around multicultural curriculum policy. She stated that with Commissioner Cruz's suggestion, she and Dr. Harris met several times and are presenting proposed revised language based on research around multicultural curriculum and education. She stated that Dr. Harris reminded her that there is more than racial diversity, but linguistic and identity diversity to deepen the reach of this policy.

Dr. Harris described the policy's recommended changes and language: expanded who is included when talking about multicultural education and removed language that only focused on African Americans and African American studies to include more groups. She stated that such changes would reflect the current demographics and the changes in the composition of the District to encompass other groups as well. She stated that she included a definition of multicultural education to acknowledge the complex social identities of students and teachers that intersect with various characteristics including social class, gender, immigration status, and transnational standing. She further stated that it is about issues of race and ethnicity, but people within the District have complex identities. She described that the recommended policy expands to be more inclusive. She stated that there were also changes made around the charge of the Superintendent and Administration regulation and guidelines. She stated that there is a mandate for secondary schools to have African American and Latino Studies and materials in order to institutionalize that commitment even when there are changes to the leadership. She stated that language was added to be clearer around indicators and benchmarks to evaluate the implementation and impact of curriculum related to multicultural education. She described multicultural education as a process with curriculum as one aspect, but it is also about helping students become critical thinkers and promoting greater equity and access.

Commissioner Hallmark asked how the work of the Curriculum Council is impacted by this policy. Dr. Gkourlias responded that the Curriculum Council meets biweekly and the Curriculum Council reflects upon curriculum proposals through the lens of the policy. She stated that at the recent Curriculum Council meeting, they reviewed a proposal around the cultural responsiveness and the developmental needs of students while cross referencing this policy and other policies around the development of curriculum.

Commissioner Adams thanked Dr. Christiana Otuwa, Dr. Jennifer Gkourlias, and Dr. Donna Harris. She stated that understanding that this District is a majority Black district with a significant population of Latino students and the mandates address that in secondary education, but identity development begins in early childhood education and that it is important to have real attention to identity development in early childhood education. She stated that there is a need to embrace high quality multicultural education, but there is a need to address the District's majority culture at an early age. Commissioner Powell asked Commissioner Adams what type of language she would want to see. Commissioner Adams responded that she would like to see a mandate similar to the one for secondary level that addresses it. Dr. Otuwa responded that she could add elementary schools or all schools because the K-2 curriculum being written will focus on cultural relevancy.

Commissioner Powell suggested dropping the word "secondary" to imply all schools. Ms. Van Kerkhove suggested that the policy addresses the racial changes of the District and look at cultural aspects that make up the District.

Commissioner Powell suggested adding "with special attention to early childhood identity development." Commissioner Adams stated that she does not want to be prescriptive.

Commissioner Powell stated that there should not be just a teaching of understanding if it means overlooking a cultural identity.

Commissioner Adams stated that the original stilted language reflected a concern or debate of having a diluted, superficial multicultural education including textbooks with images of students with different skin colors and food night. She stated that the original language focused on the District's dominate culture with an emphasis and dominance reflected in the students' curriculum. She stated that she wants to ensure that there is attention to the majority population in our District at the beginning of education where identity development is important. She stated that there may not be an edit need in the policy language because in the Curriculum Council, there is attention to it. She commended the Curriculum Council for their good work.

Dr. Gkourlias stated that Executive Director of Social Studies Audra Schmitt and Director of African and African American Studies Djinga St. Louis were involved in reviewing the policy and wanted to make sure it was clear. She further stated that it needs to be embedded and ingrained not only in the materials used, but the language and interactions with students and families. She suggested creating a sentence that states we are mindful of the dominate culture in our District and ensures that they are represented in an appropriate balance because there will be changing populations over time.

Dr. Harris stated that one of the tensions is wanting language that reflects the student community, but not wanting it to be held hostage by it as well. She stated that they were trying to provide clarity, but not stuck because how it is implemented may be different based on the time and demographics and vary across grade level and school site. She stated that there needs to be some flexibility, but it needs to ensure that there is not a superficial recognition and must be deep and flexible to address contextual needs.

Commissioner Cruz stated that he liked that language and reminded others that this is a policy statement on behalf the District in regards to how global and cultural education is viewed in our community. He stated that if there is more reference to the dominate cultures, that would be ok, but he does not want to lose the fact this is global and across different cultures. He stated that there are different cultures within cultures. He stated that specific language will not address all those complexities and issues. He commended them for doing a great job at keeping it global yet showing the importance of our emphasis on it. He suggested referencing the dominant populations and express special attention to them and their particular needs.

Dr. Harris asked if the policy is just about the dominant population. She stated that if Latino students represent 20% of the student population, their needs to be reflected in the curriculum as well. Commissioner Adams responded that African American and Latino are the two largest populations. She stated that the District has an African and African American Studies Department, Dr. Harris has been hired to provide Latino expertise, and the Teacher Center has crafted curriculum that reflects African descent. She stated that she wants to make sure that there is wealth of scholarship, materials, and commitment to those the District serves and does not want it side tracked based on other motives.

President White stated that the African and African American studies policy was one of the first things he did on the Board and the resolution language called for the infusion of African and African American culture and tradition into District curriculum, but such work has not happened.

He stated that over the last few years, there has been reviews of policy implementation. He stated that there is great language in the recommended policy changes, but there are implementation challenges. He described being in a classroom at Wilson Foundation where a teacher's classroom displayed the students' culture and the students loved it. He stated that while the language is important, it is important to recognize who is in the classroom, and who is principal and the superintendent so in-service training is very critical. He stated that the Board has to get serious with the Superintendent around the implementation and monitoring of the policy.

Commissioner Powell stated that Interim Superintendent Cimusz has attended every committee meeting during her three month duration and this has not happened before where a superintendent has listened to the will of the Board first hand.

Ms. Van Kerkhove asked for clarification regarding the administrative guidelines of the recommended policy languages. Dr. Harris stated that she only included new language.

President White suggested that it would be helpful to know how the powerful language will be enforced. He expressed concern about there not being follow up or enforcement. Commissioner Cruz responded that there are mechanisms where the Board receives annual or quarterly reports. He suggested adding that the Board will be presented annually about the implementation of the policy and potential changes to the policy. He further stated that sometimes the Board forgets that their role is to review and hold accountable regarding policies.

Commissioner Hallmark stated that it is the Superintendent's job to ensure that policy is enacted and the Board needs regular structures to keep the Superintendent accountable. She stated that this can be a role for the Board Governance committee where there are quarterly discussion and work sessions around policies and the main topics from all of the committee meetings.

Commissioner Adams stated that the pressure of the Board to the Administration on this topic has been applied. She stated that this was a key element for the ad hoc Common Core committee and Curriculum Council has been doing this work in a very systematic way. She stated that there has been reports to the Excellence in Student Achievement committee, Dr. Gkourlias provided a timeline where they are in progress for examining criteria, working towards unpacking and replacing the most harmful K-2 modules, and by Fall 2017 there will be a revamped K-2 curriculum. She also stated that all secondary schools have a Pan African course in progress now, but there are issues with it being offered only as an elective. She stated that there will be continuous progress in this area if collectively amplified. She stated that the Community Task Force on School Climate is recommending specifics on this.

Dr. Gkourlias responded that they have read the ad hoc report to refocus the Curriculum Council on the actual charge given by the Board and the policies guide their work. She stated that the work is deep, focuses on changing mindsets, rooted in the recommendation of the Board, and helps practitioners understand the work. She stated that they have been working on the Latino Studies course and her and Dr. Harris have been working with a teacher who has been working on such a course that focuses on the multiple identities within the Latino community. She stated they have been strategizing to give it the same push they did last spring to offer the African American Studies course in all the high schools. She stated that this needs to be in every literature course, not just the one that indicates Latino Studies. She stated that they are having such dialogue and desire to go further faster and the policies help when faced with stagnation and resistance.

President White described when Commissioner Cruz was the head of the Policy Committee, Debra Flanagan was support staff, and he became Board President, there was a comprehensive view of all Board policies and the development of a policy log. He stated that it is reviewed during Leadership Meetings and Board Clerk Shanai Lee continues it in the absence of the former General Counsel Ed Lopez. He stated that the log should be owned by the Administration at the Leadership Meetings. He further stated that there should be a periodic review of the policies.

Commissioner Powell stated that the policies are the ones that call for regular review and an upcoming agenda item is how to standardized deliverables. She stated that as the manual is being reviewed, it will be to determine if a policy should be tracked annually. She described the creation of a standard template that outlines the who, what, when, and how of the policy in order to create standards and expectations of the deliverables from the Administration.

Commissioner Powell stated that the policy is not quite complete. She requested that she would like to see the resolution that President White referred to in regards to the creation of the African American Studies Department for language that might illuminate the statement of purpose. She asked if there were current regulations on this policy and such regulations can put her colleagues at ease about the genuineness of its implementation. She stated that there should be a 3550.30 – Exhibit for an annual report. She told General Counsel Charles Johnson that she would like a standard template for all Board policies that call for review. The committee agreed for them to come back with a new, updated policy.

IV. Discussion: Policy 5153 Parent Preference/Managed Choice.

Commissioner Powell stated that she met with Commissioner Hallmark to create a committee facilitated by Commissioner Hallmark because Commissioner Powell expressed being too close to the issue, but desires to be a part of the committee in order to provide the history and back story of the committee. She asked if other Board members wanted to be a part of the committee. She stated that the committee will be 8 to 10 members and two parents have expressed interest.

Ms. Van Kerkhove suggested two parents from the Parent Advisory Council. Commissioner Hallmark suggested a parent from School No. 12. Commissioner Adams suggested a principal and neighborhood community leader to join the committee.

Commissioner Powell stated there is a need for representatives from the Placement Office and Specialized Services Department. She stated that she is not confident that Specialized Services who place students understands the Board's intent that Special Education students have as much choice as able to be given to them including services in their neighborhood schools when possible and appropriate. She asked if it is the will of the Policy Committee to establish a committee by resolution at the Board meeting. President White responded that the Board President could create a committee.

Commissioner Powell expressed that she wanted to ensure that the committee is diverse.

V. Review of Current Board Policies with Deliverables –District-wide (Series 1000)

Commissioner Powell stated that the opening policies have a large number of polices that require regular review and evaluation. She stated that she is inclined to skip Series 0000 until there is a template. She asked the Committee to read each policy in Series 1000 to determine if the policy should stand as written or whether something needs to change. She stated that her goal is move through the policies without controversy and then focus on others that may need final language changes.

VI. Presentation/Recommendations: Proposed Board By-Laws – Board Clerk Shanai Lee and General Counsel Charles Johnson

Ms. Lee stated that she worked with Mr. Johnson to review and amend the original proposed Board by-laws created by Erie 1 BOCES that did not apply to our District. She asked that the focus of this conversation be on the added section around the standards for development and informed decision making.

Mr. Johnson stated that the BOCES' version discussed the buying and selling of property where schools are located, but the City of Rochester holds the titles and owns all the schools and RCSD manages and maintains the schools. He also stated that the BOCES' version described the school district's ability to sell bonds, but the selling of bonds is done through the City of Rochester. He stated that there were titles and job function descriptions that did not apply to RCSD. Mr. Johnson asked if he could come back with changes to the Board by-laws that reflect the RCSD as oppose to the changes that BOCES provided to the District.

Ms. Lee described the development process of the professional development section of the Board by-laws including interviewing members of the Board about three alternatives: (1) status quo – state mandated training that addresses fiscal oversight and governance training for those who were elected after 2010; (2) Board Governance Committee lead in proposing a curriculum of training for the full Board and the process be articulated in the Board by-laws; and (3) the Board as a body contract with a vendor to conduct a needs assessment, design a curriculum, and administer the curriculum. At the conclusion of her dissertation, she recommended Alternative #2 of having the Board Governance Committee propose annual training for members of the Board to partake. Ms. Lee proceeded to read the proposed changes to the Board by-laws regarding professional development. She stated that with the election of Commissioner Hallmark, there was a realization that there was no formal process that detailed how new Commissioners would be on-boarded. The proposed changes to the by-laws position the Board to take seriously the training and development opportunities that are needed to fulfill the roles and responsibilities for school board stewardship.

Commissioner Powell asked how does one enforce this proposed change. Ms. Lee responded that only the NYS Commissioner of Education can sanction or remove school board members. She stated that by putting it in the local policy that Board members would want to take part in it and it is not deigned to be a penalty but to prepare Board members for their roles and responsibilities.

Commissioner Adams stated that she does not like the heavy emphasis on the role of professional organizations because there are other ways that contribute to their knowledge base, the diversity of what they bring, and other learning opportunities. Ms. Lee responded that the title is not intended

to limit the Board to the regional or nation school board associations, and and an amendment can be added to the proposed by-laws to include other learning opportunities.

Ms. Lee asked if there were any concerns among Board members to add this section because there are hopes that once the by-laws are presented to the full Board that this section could be added to show the Board's overall commitment to professional development. She stated that New York State requires the least amount of professional development in the nation amongst our state's school board associations, only requiring six hours of professional development for Board members elected prior to 2010 that only focuses on fiscal oversight and it must occur only within the first 12 months of service. She stated that she hopes that the Board sees the value of professional development and in comparison to other Big 5 School Boards, the Rochester School Board does pretty well in attending conferences and participation in webinars.

Commissioner Adams responded that she attends webinars and talks with staff of the Alliance of Quality Education. She stated that has no interest in tracking or reporting, but finds such activities meaningful. Commissioner Hallmark suggested the sharing of conference, webinar, and other information amongst each other. She stated that there is a value in sharing what has been learned. She stated that this could take place with the Board Governance Committee.

Ms. Van Kerkhove suggested that Board members throughout the year can forward events they attended to the Board staff and Board staff maintains a list.

President White stated that information sharing take place informally as a point of personal privilege. He suggested that it may be more helpful to have a structured process and a policy stating that Board members have to provide a summary, but challenging.

Commissioner Cruz suggested a one page form and contacting various Board members for additional materials.

Commissioner Powell suggested adding a phrase about turnkey responsibility and opportunity through the Board Governance committee for Board members to share what was learned.

Ms. Lee asked if there is a willingness of the Board to accept such change and adding language to the by-laws and there are no sanctions. Commissioner Powell added that this is a valuable contribution because one of the criteria that the NYS Commissioner of Education uses board policy and any violations to uphold and determine the removal of a school board member.

Commissioner Hallmark stated that conferences paid by the District have a record of it, and this could be used to determine if there is participation in professional development opportunities. Ms. Lee responded that even professional development opportunities that do not cost like the Monroe County School Board Association and New York State School Board Association provide a record of the Commissioners who participated.

President White suggested that when a Commissioner applies for reimbursement, they submit a one page form with a paragraph and attach materials. Commissioner Hallmark responded that this is helpful to find the main idea of a conference

Commissioner Powell asked if page five, section: Reporting of Expenditures and Contributions was a new addition based on the new law. Ms. Lee responded that the section was captured in the

BOCES version and RCSD is one of few school boards in the state that participate in the general election.

Commissioner Powell asked if this should be advanced to the full Board. Ms. Lee responded with a no because Mr. Johnson has several other specific details and amendments that need to be changed to make it more applicable to the district.

Commissioner Powell asked committee members if they are comfortable with the current Business Meeting Agenda outlined in the by-laws because as matter of practice, the Board President has called on speakers both on and off the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. She asked if it would be the will of the Board to make the permanent change to the Business Meeting Agenda. Commissioners White and Adams agreed with such a change.

Ms. Lee stated that there was a change proposed by Commissioner Campos in the Board Governance Committee – the Vice President be appointed as chair of the Board Governance Committee. Commissioner Powell stated that prior to the existence of Audit Committee, the Vice President did not chair a committee. She also stated that it could change the selection of the Vice President based on who would best serve the Board Governance Committee. Commissioner Hallmark described her challenges of being the newest member of the Board and being chair of the Board Governance Committee. Commissioner Adams stated that it may be nice to have a Board Governance Chair who is not a part of the executive body and having a different locus of control to decentralize. President White stated that it is reflection of personality and not sure if the chair would exercise more power, and there has been a challenge to make the current assignments work. Commissioner Cruz stated that the intent was Commissioner Campos viewed it as a natural role of the Vice President. Commissioner Powell stated that she sensed a consensus to strike the role of the Vice President from the proposed by-laws.

Commissioner Cruz suggested reflecting multiple superintendents and adding the Parent Advisory Council's report to the Business Meeting Agenda.

President White stated that the by-laws say that the Board can elect another Board member to facilitate the meeting outside of the President. Commissioner Powell stated that past school boards may have added that. She further stated that a Board President may choose to select another to facilitate if they wanted to contribute to the conversation as oppose to facilitate. Commissioner Powell stated the Committee is looking to have the original language removed so the President retains facilitation of the meetings unless he or she chooses.

VII. Miscellaneous

Mr. Johnson stated that on behalf of the Administration for the Policy Committee to consider at a future meeting – in the past District employees who lived outside of the school district enrolled their children in district schools and there have been occasions when such request have been denied so there has been inconsistent practices in the absence of Board policy. He stated that the District should not be doing this without Board direction because if student attends, there is the gifting of a free education or should become a benefit of employment. He asked if the Policy Committee would like the Administration to craft a proposal to present before the committee.

Commissioner Adams suggested that the policy should be that they should move into the District. Commissioner Cruz stated that he agreed with Commissioner Adams and he would like the Finance Committee to look at the financial implications.

Commissioner Hallmark asked if it would apply to employees other than teachers. Mr. Johnson responded that it could be any employee that would be a non-resident and while he is not advocating, one thing to consider is that the home district transfers the tuition with the child or the employee pays the pre-unit cost tuition to address the financial component. Commissioner Powell stated that a district teacher is actually in this position and was told that they had to stop bringing their child to the school after receiving permission in the past. She stated that she and Commissioner Hallmark spoke with the Interim Superintendent and the Deputy Superintendent of Administration, and shared that without Board policy, it is up to the Superintendent's power and discretion. She stated that it is a complex situation, but the Board would benefit from having language developed that covers all the basis and takes into account all the factors.

Commissioner Cruz expressed concern about looking at a policy that could affect staff and dealing with the situations without being punitive. Commissioner Powell stated that when her and Commissioner Hallmark became involved, they showed compassion regarding the situation and it would appear punitive regarding tuition from the student's home district. Commissioner Adams stated that impoverished Black women have been imprisoned based on the theft of education because they attempt to send their children to other school districts. President White stated that he represented two of those parents who wanted the same thing. He stated that this needs to be discussed with the full Board and suggested that the Administration come to the Board with recommendation on how to proceed. He suggested that the District goes to the suburban district and request the tuition to ensure it is equitable. Commissioner Powell responded that she shared with the Interim Superintendent that in the absence of Board policy, it is the responsibility of the superintendent to work through this specific case. Commissioner Cruz expressed concern about the policy implications. Ms. Lee suggested that the policy should articulate that if the school has a waitlist or is highly selected, resident students should have opportunity at those schools.

VIII. Follow-up Items

Ms. Lee stated that the proposed Board by-laws can return to the Policy Committee in the summer.

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Powell to adjourn. Adopted 5-0 with concurrence from the Parent Representative.

Meeting adjourned at 7:33PM (approximate time).