



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
December 13, 2012
7:00 p.m.
Albany High School

PRESENT: Dan Egan, President
Rose Brandon, Vice President
Alexandra Streznewski, Secretary
Sue Adler
Ginnie Farrell
Edith Leet
Dr. Vanden Wyngaard
Dr. Linda Rudnick
Kathleen Culligan
Mark Place

ABSENT/EXCUSED:
Felicia Green
Dr. Tresa Diggs
Bill Hogan

Call to Order:

- Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. All present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Members of the audience were welcomed and thanked for taking the time to attend the meeting.
- The Mission Statement was read.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. V advised she has participated in three fireside chats. Several additional meetings are scheduled, including one at the Albany Public Library hosted by Marlon Anderson. Following meetings through February, they will be put on hold to focus on budget development and community-engagement process around the future of Albany High School.

The Albany High School chess team took first place in the Right Moves Tournament in Schenectady last Saturday. This is the first time our team has won that tournament in three years – a great achievement for our talented students. Hopefully, these students will be available at a future Board meeting, along with their advisor, Liz Gialanella, so they can be recognized.

Albany High students Dennis Dominguez Martes and Jose Vega collaborated to win the Best Screen Play award at the recent 50 Hour Film Festival. The competition required students to incorporate three specific elements, including an egg, and conceive, script, film and edit the video over the course of a weekend. Dennis and Jose are students in Mark Sickler's Video Production class. They will also be invited to a future meeting.

Finally, we have been able to slow Philo Germano down long enough to get him here to recognize him for the amazing cross-country season he has only recently completed. Dr. V listed his recent achievements and wished him well in his future challenges. Philo spoke about his goals and achievements and thanked the Board for this recognition.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Student representatives, Deshonna Bernard and Miguel Mercedes spoke about the success of the Falcon Passes, noting that additional efforts will be made to engage seniors in this project. Concern was expressed with the bathrooms in the physical education department, along with needed supplies. Students are asking for larger lunch portions. For students who have early lunch, they are hungry by mid-afternoon. Students who are lactose intolerant are asking that juice be provided as part of the lunch menu. Respect for one another in the high school is starting to improve. Students are beginning to feel that when you disrespect someone the negativity follows you.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Vincent Rigosu addressed the Board relative to attendance. He was concerned at the last meeting when there were vacancies on the Board considering the important discussion of the planning for renovations/rebuild of Albany High School. Mr. Rigosu also commented on the amount of food served in student meals at the high school.

INFORMATION

Fine Arts Program

Dr. V introduced Kate Wright, Art Chairperson, and Catherine Amodeo, Music Chairperson, who presented an overview of the Fine Arts Program in the District. The presentation included the elements of exemplary Music and Art Programs, overviews of each program, findings, recommendations for elementary, middle school and high school programs, associated costs, enrollment information, and an executive summary that included the advantages fine arts brings to students and how the fine arts are related to student achievement. Mr. Egan thanked the superintendent and those involved in putting the report together and for the valuable information contained in the report.

- Ms. Farrell clarified that there isn't a real budget for the music and art programs. There is a music budget for large equipment, contractual services, lesson books that are textbooks. At the building level they allocate money for reeds, strings, instructional books, piano tuning, specific resources, and supplies. A small amount of instrument repair is also included in this. Art supplies are consumable. The high school has a budget for art classes. Some principals communicate with staff and others advise the budget amount. Teachers have to advocate for additional funds. Many teachers are personally supplementing the art programs.
- Are the financial inequities related to the depth of programming?
Teachers do spend their own money. Often times, teachers repair instruments with parts from older instruments. Teachers also share their resources. It is difficult to run an exemplary art program without supplies. More expensive materials would enhance the program.
- The lack of a Mac in the high school is concerning. Those students who want to go into graphic design do not have the opportunity to work on this equipment. Is there a way to solve this problem?
The Technology budget has not moved in the last five years. The cost of a Mac Lab runs close to \$100,000. A Mac Lab at this time is not cost effective. The District is obligated to maintain the equipment.

- This is very useful information. My concerns center in the area of alignment of music and art with the rest of the curriculum. Given the current fiscal situation and personnel contracts we live under, that makes up the school's 2% tax cap. The data we are missing is the alignment of curriculum, achievement, and students. Funding is different. We need to be looking at aligning the arts and music with everything else we do.

- Concerned about the inequities in the middle schools. Research needs to be more applicable to our students and our District. Have you solicited instruments from the public and also volunteers who might be able to perform competent repairs?

Instruments are donated to the schools. We do use vendors in the area who do repairs and are less expensive. This year we will be working with the grant writer for additional funding for the program.

- One of the things that is critically important is the alignment between the arts and curriculum, i.e. project based learning. The other thing is that music and art are things that bring students to school every day. The problem is the lack of centralized work in getting the program up and running in the schools. Scheduling needs to include opportunities for students to have lunch.

- In certain elementary schools are children on a wait because there are not instruments available?

The issue is time for teachers in the building.

- I would like to see exactly what is allocated at each school and how many students are participating. If you have these numbers we can actually look at statistics. Guest artists were recommended. That is one area where funding is available.

- We still have barriers to kids participating at the elementary level, some of which are based on academics. If you attend any of the concerts, the population does not reflect the student body of the District. By putting the barriers in place in elementary and middle school, we perpetuate that. What can be done to increase involvement in art and music for minority students and students who are not performing well academically?

As we move students to the higher levels, the minorities start to drop out. Some of the barriers are the AIS schedules. There are not enough minutes in the day to accommodate state required courses. The flexible time that has been built into the schedule has helped tremendously this year. We continue to look at solutions to these issues.

Dr. V noted that she was the director of choral activities in three different school districts in three different states. Albany is not facing anything different than any other school district in the country. Music demographics reflect society, be it symphony, orchestra, opera, ballet, etc., the school district reflects society as a whole. One of the things that we don't do well in schools is create an avenue for students of color to participate with music that they want to participate with. Regardless of the outcome, for many of our students, Mozart, Brahms, Beethoven, have very little understanding as compared to "Tupac" and others. How we talk about music differently, to build a bridge between what students do like and what we want is an incredibly difficult bridge to build, but not one that we can ignore.

Dr. V advised she would agree around the curriculum integration pieces is literally the way that fine arts are going to survive. She met with supervisors and directors today and they talked about cross curricular work. She insisted that music and art be a part of that conversation. We are looking for resources to allow a broader conversation this summer to get those things shored up. We also have to talk about some creative scheduling. We appreciate if a band person wants to have only five trumpets, but we can't afford it any longer. We have to move to low brass or brass. We have to have classes filled with students with their instruments. We no longer will be able to hold private lessons. If that is not possible, we will need to move lessons to after school. When you talk about resources, allocations, and grants, people are not paying attention to music and art. There is very little resources available unless we are talking about alignment.

Dr. V noted that these are all things that are doable. We have to figure a creative way to do that. Dr. V expressed her gratitude to Ms. Wright, Ms. Amodeo and Dr. Rudnick for their efforts in putting together the presentation for this evening. Mr. Egan thanked the superintendent, staff, and board members for this quality discussion.

DISCUSSION

2013-2014 Budget

Mr. Egan noted that in the absence of Mr. Hogan, Dr. V would be doing a presentation on the 2013-2014 Budget. The discussion this evening is about goals and what the District hopes to accomplish with those dollars and cents. Dr. V began the discussion talking about the belief that people have about our families, our children, and each other. There are many opportunities for students to learn to succeed. Dr. V spoke about the many opportunities, partnerships, enrichment activities, and university partnerships that the District has already established. Dr. V noted she firmly believe that the City School District of Albany can be the best urban district in the country by 2020. The expectation is that the District graduate college and career ready students with the knowledge and skills, beliefs, and attitudes to be successful. The expectation also include students going on to college, universities and careers without remediation, and that those students come back to Albany, have children, and start that cycle again.

Dr. V spoke about the performance goals, operational goals and a focus in meeting these goals. Dr. V noted that 2013-14 will be the fourth consecutive budget developed in the midst of financial crisis. The District already has reduced staffing levels by more than 300 positions and consolidated six buildings in order to reduce costs. The District has carefully reviewed its programs in the past 36 months and in some cases trimmed them. Given the scarce financial resources, difficult choices will have to be made and priority given to the academic goals and initiatives offered to improve student achievement.

Dr. V spoke about academic goals, program review, proposed focus in meeting Board goals, and next steps in the budget development over the next four months. This will include the impact on student achievement, cost/benefit, level of participation, mandated vs. un-mandated, staffing levels and the impact of changes in grant funding on programming. The budget will evolve over the next four months as new information becomes available and is updated throughout the process. Assumptions may change and preliminary estimates will change.

Working as a team and staying focused on the goal to improve student achievement throughout the budget process will ensure the best possible budget in this environment.

Dr. V also reviewed the following academic goals:

- Increase overall student performance in all the subgroups 3% to 5% over the next five years.
Compounded, students will improve by 16% to 28% over the next five years.
- Gateway Regents exam increase 3% to 5%
Algebra, Living Environment, Global Studies, U.S. History and ELA
- Grades 3 – 8 state assessments increase 3% to 5%
- Graduation rate increases 3% to 5%
- Attendance
More than 90% of students miss fewer than 10 days

Budget development next steps will follow the Budget Development Calendar with updates, and presentation at Board, budget meetings. Communication will include a variety of mediums such as the District website, School News Notifier, Facebook (Albany City Schools), numerous budget presentations, Budget Newsletter and postcard and the media. State aid and Mandate Relief will also be monitored, and lobbying efforts for additional funding and mandate relief will continue.

- As we are preparing the budget, how and when do we talk about changes in the way we do things, i.e. reconfiguring classes, promotion issues that may also affect the budget?

The Board would have to charge the administration to look at those options and we would bring that back for Board discussion. We would not go there unless there is a request from the Board.

- What information will be presented to the Board in consideration of elimination of programs?

It is an arduous process. Laying specific programs in place, personnel and students involved in the program and look at them and talk about how this can be done differently within the financial limits. How information is presented will be part of a discussion involving Mr. Hogan as the process moves on.

- Aligning cuts with academic performance would be a preference.

Board members noted this is a great start which will lead to some difficult decisions. It sets aspirations. If this is our goal we have to keep that in mind as we construct the budget. We have to minimize secondary efforts to this budget. We have to concentrate budget with goals. Four years ago the District received \$85 million. Today, that amount is \$74 million, which is \$11 million less. Also the District only receives 64% of its State aid allocation.

Policy Review

Mr. Egan presented the following policies for review.

2120.2 Voting Procedures Concern centered around the District's requirement regarding the presentation of identification at the polling sites prior to voting. The policy is currently silent on this requirement. Following considerable discussion, the policy will be sent back to the Policy Committee for further discussion with counsel and appropriate language indicating that identification is required. The policy will be returned to the Policy Committee.

There was no further discussion on policies. They will be presented at the January Board meeting for approval.

2013-2014 Board Meeting Schedule

Discussion continued around the date of September 4th, which is the start of Rosh Hashanah. The meeting date will be changed to Tuesday, September 3, 2013. The July meeting date will be eliminated. Appointments will be presented in August for the upcoming year. Additional discussion included scheduling the Board meetings in rotation to each school throughout the year. Discussion related to location of Board meetings concluded with the suggestion that meetings will be scheduled in school buildings in rotation. Abrookin will be treated as part of the high school. There was also an issue with rotation of Board members for the agenda setting meetings. Ms. Cutting advised to rotate the leadership in developing the agenda would be cumbersome in terms of approval for changes that may become necessary prior to the Board meeting. Following additional discussion it was decided that Board Officers will develop the agenda in collaboration with the superintendent.

ROUTINE CONSENT

Mr. Egan presented the following Routine Consent Items for approval: Proceedings of Meetings (November 8, 2012, November 28, 2012, and November 29, 2012); Human Resources Items; Attendance at Conferences, Field Trip, Treasurer's Report, Budget Transfers under \$10,000, Budget Transfers Over \$10,000, Revenue Status Report, Appropriation Status Report, Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund, Real Property Tax Adjustments, Tax Collection Report, Grant Financials, Disposal of Assets, Authorization to Enter Into Contracts. Ms. Farrell made a motion to approve routine consent items as presented. Ms. Adler seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the Routine Consent Items.
Motion passed.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Farrell noted the Facilities Committee met last week, discussion included the design for the Giffen Cafeteria. The group was updated on Abrookin and creating a capital reserve fund in light of the upcoming sale of buildings and use those funds for the upkeep of our schools, i.e., roof and window repairs. A priority list currently totals \$5.5 million. Schools that were renovated in the beginning of the renovations are now in need of repairs.

BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Mrs. Leet noted the Board needs to decide on initiatives they would like to be part of consideration through this budget cycle. Mr. Egan suggested a Board budget workshop. Mrs. Leet read a list of items that might change student achievement. Following discussion regarding the responsibilities of the Board, Ms. Adler noted that other than grade configuration, these are things that are the responsibility of the Superintendent. Ms. Streznewski noted with a new Superintendent there have already been notable changes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Farrell noted that next year, the District needs to submit a new Technology Plan. As Board members we need to discuss future plans. Dr. V noted dialogue has already begun in this process. Dr. V noted the plan itself will also be reviewed.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Egan called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Adler made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Egan seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 10:25 p.m.