



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
March 20, 2014
7:00 p.m.
Sheridan Preparatory Academy

PRESENT: Dr. Rose Brandon, President
Dan Egan, Vice President
Ginnie Farrell, Secretary
Sue Adler
Felicia Green
Anthony Owens
Alexandra Streznewski

Dr. Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard
Bill Hogan
Dr. Tresa Diggs
Dr. Liz TenDyke
Kathleen Culligan
Mark Place

ABSENT: None

Call to Order:

- Meeting was called to order at 7:10 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

During the interview process for the City School District of Albany I knew that this district was different, more focused and powerful than I ever could have imagined. For several hours, community members talked openly about the difficulties facing the district and the city . . .high levels of poverty . . . unemployment, and that the City School District of Albany was not quite contributing to ensure that the city could thrive again. The conversations were honest about the divide in the city, not just physically, but philosophically, emotionally and issues of equity and access. And yet people also spoke of the community that they love and their favorite neighborhoods from Arbor Hill to White Hall to Buckingham Pond to Washington Square.

The community and the Board of Education, challenged me to lead the district toward an educational future that ensures that all students, 8,900 of them meet and exceed expectations, thrive and develop toward their career and collegiate aspirations and demonstrate citizenship and excellence within our diverse community. This also means that we cannot continue to do the same things and expect different results. The Board of Education and the citizens made it clear that we would not continue to accept the same results as have been in the past and challenged me to create a system of learning to ensure we reach our mission. To not do so, would be a disservice to every child, every family and every resident in our community. As it is in many districts, the range of needs and abilities for each student is as wide as the city itself.

However the strategy to invest in our staff to ensure they have the skills, fortitude, flexibility and stamina to engage in creating powerful learning opportunities for students, that are measurable and visible for building leaders to observe through learning walks and for the central office staff to meet the needs of the leaders instead of meeting the needs driven by the state or grants was a strategic decision by the leadership team to support whole district transformation. I stand by those decisions.

You will also remember that I committed to ensure that the public through a variety of means is able to engage in conversations, consultation and provide input. To that end, the budget development process is exactly that – a process and community input and feedback is critical. We added two January district-wide community meetings to our process a few years before I arrived. This year we added school-based budget conversations at all 16 schools and I know many of you attended some or all of those sessions. We value your input and in particular you will note changes in the proposed tier reductions in the PowerPoint tonight that have changed since the last time we met. You will notice that freshman basketball has been moved from Tier One to Tier Three . . . Chinese and IB have been moved from Tier Two to Tier Three and we also proposed a reduction in studio classrooms as well as moving it up from Tier Three to Tier One. We heard you - “slow down Dr. V you are going too fast,” and we have taken your input through this consultation process.

What I love about Albany is no one in bashful about making their thoughts known and I am thankful for that. As you have asked for more information and we have provided it sooner in the process, it causes a different conversation, disequilibrium, and an openness to listening that I perceive from historians is unprecedented. I want to remind you that we are not done yet! We have another meeting next Tuesday and meetings again on April 3 and April 10. There are multiple community meetings beginning to be scheduled all the way up to the May 20 budget vote to ensure that we can answer all the questions that our community members have. It is my hope that you will continue to fully participate in this process. Yes, I am asking all of you to commit to the 2020 Vision and promising that we will do this work within the framework of our community’s resources.

Dr. V noted the Albany High School Boys and Girls Indoor Track Team enjoyed a highly successful season this summer, both in competition and in the classroom. The girls won the Big 10 Championship that includes 7 first-place performances. The Lady Falcons also won New York State Scholar Athlete Recognition as a team with a cumulative GPA above 95. The boys team had Big 10 and Section 2 Champions. The boys cumulative GPA was above 94, also winning State Scholar Recognition. He boys Coach, Matt Ayscue introduced the following members of the teams.

Girls Big10 Champions

Jahari Coleman- 55m, 7.26 (6th fastest time in Section 2 history, school record)

Jahara Arrington- 300m, 44.06

Tiaria Gaines- High Jump, 5-00.00

Eileen Bequette- Pole Vault, 8-03.00

Destini Harris- Long Jump, 15-02.50

Jahari Colen, J'Hahna Thomas, Jala Moore, and Larisa Chestnut- 4x200m Relay, 1:50.45

Jahara Arrington, Alexis Brown, Demonae Brown, and Destini Harris- 4x400m Relay,
4:31.73

Boys Big10 Champions

James Willard, Syeed Holtzclaw, Jeffery Gritsavage, and Benjamin Wells- 4x400m Relay,
3:37.20

Boys Section2 Champions

James Willard Jeffery Gritsavage, NESTA Littlejohn, and Tysheem Morris- 4x200 Relay,
1:37.49

James Willard, Syeed Holtzclaw, Jeffery Gritsavage, and Benjamin Wells- 4x400m Relay,
3:40.97

New York State Indoor Track and Field Championship Representatives

Jahari Coleman- 55m, ran a 7.32 and a 7.40, finished 9th in the State and 12th in the
Federation

Benjamin Wells- ran the 600m leg of the Intersectional Relay in logging a 1:27.25 split to
help his Section2 team finish 2nd in the State and 2nd in the Federation with a time of
8:58.34(4th fastest time in Section 2 history)

ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS

Routine Consent Items were presented as follows: Human Resource Items; Authorization to
Enter Into Contracts; Approval of Donation (Albany Medical Center); Health Services Contracts
(North Greenbush Common School District; Saratoga Springs City School and South Colonie
Central School District); Attendance at Conferences; Field Trips; 2014 School Budget Vote
Resolutions (Library Petition). Mr. Egan made a motion for approval. Ms. Streznewski seconded
the motion. Mr. Owens requested the Attendance at Conferences be set aside.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve Routine Consent Items,
absent the item set aside.

Motion passed.

Ms. Adler made a motion to approve Attendance at Conferences. Ms. Farrell seconded the
motion. Mr. Owens questioned one of the workshops where they are all Grant funded, absent
one. Based on information presented by Ms. Wilson, Principal of Albany High School, Ms.
Adler amended her motion to note that the one General Fund conference is Grant funded. Mr.
Owens accepted the amendment.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve
Attendance at Conferences as revised.

Motion passed

INFORMATION

Coaching

Board members viewed a video, featuring Dr. V, who spoke about Coaching throughout the
District. Several staff members spoke about their experiences in coaching principals and teachers
as they work with students to improve achievement. Presently there are 18 coaches in the
District. Coaches work with school principals and teachers to provide personalized professional
development for their peers. Sara McGraw works with the coaches in providing competent,
caring teachers in every classroom throughout the District. The District has had coaches in the

District for many years, primarily through grant funding. Coaches are hired from inside the District. Prior to 2013, coaches spent 20% of their time with teachers. Currently they work with teachers between 60 & 70% of their day. Ms. McGraw advised coaches receive formal training. The main focus is increasing student achievement through professional development for teachers, learning new ways to reach the students.

Coaches, Dawn Castle and Jeremy Dudley spoke about their experiences with students and teachers in their role. They both spoke about the relationships with coaches, teachers and students. Teaching and learning relationships bring meaningful instructions for students. Teaching decisions are based on collaborative conversations between the coaches and teachers.

The District will need the best, most passionate, qualified, up-to-date on research practices, professional, open-minded, flexible, prepared, and competent teachers out there. The work coaches do is intense, data and results driven work. It's different from the model of giving after-school professional development session and then going back to the classroom in isolation. It allows teachers to try new strategies in the presence of someone who can help them reflect on how or why something works or doesn't work.

This coaching model uses researched based skills and strategies that enable students to reach their greatest potential. If the District is going to achieve its vision, it needs to invest in the teaching to help insure that our teachers are among the best you can find. Ms. McGraw concluded the presentation with an overview of the staffing numbers for coaches in the District, indicating a reduction from 18.5 in 2013-2014 to 14.5 coaches for the 2014-15 School budget.

DISCUSSION

2014-2015 School Calendar

Dr. V noted this is the time of year when the District starts to put the draft around the school calendar. One of the biggest struggles is the various vacation weeks on the calendar. This year the District looked into breaking up the winter recess to reduce the extended consecutive recess periods in order to sustain ongoing teaching and training for students. Mr. Place noted there are number of barriers that do not allow the District to make this change. The District historically has followed the BOCES school year schedule. If the District were to make change it would affect those students in out of school placements.

- How many students would be affected because of out of school placements?
The District has approximately 200 students who have been placed out-of school.
- Is there any possibility that the District could eliminate the winter recess? What would be your suggestion?

The District spoke about this last year and again this year. In 2014, state testing is scheduled for the week after winter recess. Hopefully, in the future, discussions with BOCES might allow for the elimination of this period where students are out of school. The 2014-15 School calendar will be placed on the April agenda for approval.

2014-15 Budget Development

Dr. V began the presentation with a review of the 2020 Vision and the District Operational Plan and a circle indicating the initiatives the District will put in place to support improvement in student achievement. This includes Studio Classrooms, Learning Walks and Leadership Training. Professional development is crucial to improving student achievement.

Mr. Hogan continued the presentation with budget challenges, including the continuation of state aid reductions, Charter School costs. The current level of State-aid is \$13.8 million less on an annual basis than a 2% growth level would have provided. Budget variances with items still pending related to State-aid on other unresolved issues such as health insurance costs, and the effect of the Affordable Care Act. There are also a number of grant-based programs that will lose funding at the end of this year. The proposed 2014-15 initiatives to support improvement in student achievement include Studio classrooms, leadership development, coaches to support teachers, and the continuation of student support programs.

Presently, the projected budget shows a deficit of \$4,320,188 with a 3.86% tax levy increase. Tier I and Tier II reductions were reviewed. Board members indicated their preferences in the two listings. Mr. Hogan provided a review of the tax levy history of the District and a review of cost containment measures the District has taken during the past several years. Budget discussions will continue at the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following members of the public provided comments related to the 2014-15 School budget.

Ellen Roach	Lucy Menard	Becky Evalson	Marilyn Masson
Sam Shipherd	June Criscione	Linda McTague	Susan D'Entremont
Megan Hansen	Treven Santicola	Leslie Bogucki	Jennifer Lange
John Davis	Anne Savage	Margot Plumadore	Wyan
Jan Parmalee	Charles Parmalee		

Public comments were centered around the 2014-15 School budget. The community is concerned with the amount of monies spent for consultants at the same time cuts are being made, increases in administrator salaries, elimination of foreign languages, music programs, art classes. Discussion also included the future of the IB Program, Studio Classrooms, particularly the lack of information indicating that they have been successful in other districts.

Board Committee Reports

No reports.

Board Member Items

None

Other Business

Ms. Streznewski noted she has heard the Strategic Roadmap referred to as Dr. V's vision. Ms. Streznewski noted that as she travels throughout the District, the 2020 Vision is referred to as Dr. V's vision. Ms. Streznewski stressed that this is everyone's vision, including the Board, and Board members should take ownership of the vision.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Egan made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Farrell seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cutting
District Clerk