



PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
April 3, 2014
7:00 p.m.
Albany High School

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
Jeffrey Honeywell
Dr. Tresa Diggs
Kathleen Culligan
Mark Place

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

Spelling bee winners

Back in December, 14 of our students in grades 4 through 8 came together to represent their schools in our annual district-wide spelling bee. The six finalists moved on to the regional bee in February at Proctor's Theater in Schenectady. Tonight, it is our pleasure to recognize each of these great spellers who represented our school district at Proctor's. Robyn Brady, our ELA supervisor, will tell you a little bit about the spelling bee and present a certificate to each student. The following students received a Certificate of Award: Scott Nakai-Lackey from Albany School of Humanities, Shafayet from Eagle Point Elementary School, Maura Mulholland. The overall District winner from Montessori Middle School, Logan Bennet of Meyers Middle School, and Mineira Berkley of Philip Schuyler Achievement Academy. Also present was Amina Hassy the building level from Hackett Middle School.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Student representative, Fiona Leary, Junior Class President of Albany High School, spoke about the some of the positive things that are taking place at Albany High School. A recent fund raiser initiated by Mr. Bizzaro, as a class project raised \$4,300 to fund a construction project that will provide clean water to 216 people in Africa. Construction is scheduled to begin this summer. Ms. Leary also spoke her opportunity to travel to Greece and Italy. She was very grateful for this opportunity. Annual proms for the junior and senior class will take place in May. Students are raising funds with car washes and a comedy night at The Comedy Works. Ms. Leary shared privilege opportunities for seniors with proper grades and behavior for off-campus during lunches and courtyard privileges for juniors.

DISCUSSION

2014-2015 Budget Development

Dr. V began the discussion with the following message. The Alternative Education will be moved into the budget discussion. Dr. V noted the news you're about to hear has been a long time coming. Six years, as a matter of fact. For the first time since the spring of 2008, our school district has received an amount of state aid that will allow us to make it through the next year without being forced to take away programs and staff that our students need and deserve. As I'm sure you've heard, we learned Monday that our state aid for 2014-15 is projected to be \$5.9 million more than the January estimates we had been working with. This is great news for all of us. We are grateful to the Governor and Legislature for hearing our concerns – and to those who helped us make sure that our concerns were heard.

I want to express my thanks to everyone who sent letters and e-mails, and made phone calls, to help us make the case to our state leaders. Your support is greatly appreciated. We also are grateful to our Assembly representatives – Pat Fahy and John McDonald – for their tireless work on behalf of our children and our community. Also, thanks to our state senator, Neil Breslin, for his support as well.

While we all let go with a huge sigh of relief this week, we also know that we still have work to do to plan for and maintain the long-term stability of our school district in 2015-16 and beyond. I'm going to turn it over to Bill Hogan now to tell us more about all of that.

Mr. Hogan began the presentation with a review of the tenets of the 2020 vision and the operational plan, along with the proposed initiatives, Leadership Training, Learning Walks, and the Studio Classrooms, that hopefully will support improvement in student achievement to reach the District goals of the 2020 vision.

Mr. Hogan encouraged the public to come out and vote. Many times there is generally a very low voter turn-out when the tax levy is very low. The final budget is scheduled to be approved by the board at the April 10th meeting. The increase in state aid will allow the District to get back on its feet following the past several years with reduced revenues. The District will be able to maintain previously identified Tier I reductions in programming, redesign the IB Diploma program to improve and offer more opportunities for participation, maintain Chinese and French offerings, Third-grade instrumental music instructions in all schools, continue to enhance instructional supports through studio classrooms, learning walks, instructional coaches and to redesign AIS< ALC and TLC programs. In addition, the District will add a behavioral specialist at ALB and a community engagement coordinator, reduce dependence on reserves and fund balance and offer a tax levy that is eligible for reimbursement by the State to property owners eligible for STAR.

Mr. Hogan noted that budgeting should be looked at as a multi-year process. Budget decisions made today will directly impact future budgets and the ability to maintain programs. Mr. Hogan reviewed restoration of the Tier I budget cuts with the exception of 5 FTE's totaling \$611,600. Recommended additions to the budget include the behavioral specialist at the ALC, a community engagement coordinator and health and safety equipment. Mr. Hogan cautioned that the District cannot support current programs with the current levels of state-aid and tax levies. Mr. Hogan concluded his presentation with a review reserves and the fund balance, followed by a summary of the impact of recommendations that will also help the District in developing future budgets. The recommended tax levy for 2014-15 is .87%.

Following a lengthy discussion relative to allocating a portion of additional funds to special programs, the consensus of the Board is that the Superintendent investigate the possibility of presenting a well thought-out program to address specific students achievement areas that need additional consideration. The Superintendent will work with staff for presentation to the Board at the next meeting.

Ms. Adler made a motion to move the information item on Alternative Learning Community until after the public comment portion of the meeting. Mr. Egan seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following members of the public made comments relative to the 2014-15 School Budget:

Marlon Anderson	Antonia Brown	Alfredo Balarin
Edith Leet	Annemarie Lippitt	Sara McGraw
Ellen Roach	Avelyn Sanles	Treven Santicola
Rosetta Scott-Foster	Mari Shopsis	Kate Russell
Katherine Malle Sipos	Onnolee Smith	Barry Walston
Kathy Wright		

Public comments continued addressing concerns regarding the cost of consultant's at the expense of programs that make the District different from surrounding schools. Programs included the Montessori Magnet Program, the music, art and foreign language courses, the IB program, and financial decisions the District is proposing in the 2014-15 School Budget. Members of the public also thanked the board members for their dedication to the District and the students they serve.

INFORMATION

Dr. V introduced the presentation noting that a number of staff members throughout the District have been meeting to discuss changes to the ALC program to think through what a new program might look like. Ms. Sofia Newell, House Principal at the Alternative Learning Center, along with Ms. Cecily Wilson, Principal of Albany High gave a presentation on the existing program that has been a revolving door, with short-term placements, resulting from disciplinary problems with students. The program has been redesigned and relocated nearly every year in the past 4 years. This is not working. The program needs stability in all forms for a period of time to demonstrate real value and results.

Previously, the Alternative Learning Think Tank made a number of recommendations to improve the program, one of which was to separate the program.

Ms. Newell advised the group suggested separating the program for those who are having disciplinary problems, and those that need a smaller environment in order to learn.

Both programs would be geared to grades 7-12, and each would be a full-day, full-day placement.

The Choice Program would not be discipline based. It would provide block scheduling, blended learning, with a social-emotional component maximum class size would be limited to 12 students. A blended teaching model would be supported by using technology during class. Community service would also be an integral part of the instructional program and intentionally planned for within the day. All students would participate in a recreation program that runs until 5:00 p.m. each day, which will count as their physical education requirement.

The Flex Program would be specifically for students with disruptive behaviors that require superintendent hearings. Students would be provided an academic program, socio-emotional supports, an extracurricular program through a partnership with Equinox will also be available to students. This program will provide students with the opportunity to move to the Choice Program upon completion of the Flex Program. Block scheduling will involve a conversation with the union to accommodate the schedule. Teaching and learning will be blended learning, utilizing both on line tools, such as APEX as well as individual teachers. This program will also engage the family as well with wrap around services delivered with city-wide partners. Dr. V advised that if students hit the standards and apply that knowledge to something there will be a pathway to earn credits. Dr. V advised she will be submitting a request for waivers to earn credits. There are four curriculum committees running to create bold programs. Students will be able to graduate from either of these programs if they have earned the required credits.

Ms. Wilson noted the goal of this change in the program is to not wait for students to fail before they are placed in an alternative setting. Presently, students have to mess-up before they can go into alternative. This will allow students the opportunity to choose a different program that is smaller and a setting they want to attend. Part of this program will provide students the socio-emotional support as well as academic support in order for them to graduate. This is different than the disciplinary program presently in place in the District.

ACTION

2014-15 School Calendar

Dr. Brandon presented the 2014-15 School calendar for approval. Previous discussions included the issue of eliminating the winter break to reduce the time students are out of the classroom. However, the District has chosen to follow the BOCES calendar that includes the winter recess. Future discussions are expected prior to the 2015-16 calendar approval. Mr. Egan made a motion for approval. Ms. Farrell seconded the motion.

The Board voted 6 ayes and 1 opposed.

Dr. Brandon noted she is opposed because she favored the elimination of the winter recess.

Motion passed.

ROUTINE CONSENT ITEMS

Routine Consent Items were presented as follows: Proceedings of Meetings (March 6, 2014); Human Resource Items; Treasurer's Report; Budget Transfers under \$10,000; Budget Transfers over \$10,000; Revenue Status Report; Appropriation Status Report; Real Property Tax Adjustments; Central Treasurer's Report for Extra Classroom Activity Fund; Grant Financials; Authorization to Enter Into Contracts; Resolution to Appoint Hearing Officer; Resolution to Approve Charter School Public Hearing; Committee on Special Education; Subcommittee on Special Education; Committee on Pre-School Special Education;

Mr. Egan made a motion for approval. Ms. Adler seconded the motion.

The Board voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the motion.

Motion passed.

Board Committee Reports

No reports.

Board Member Items

None

Other Business

None

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Egan made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Farrell seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cutting
District Clerk