

Rochester Board of Education
Finance Committee
August 19, 2010
Immediately following Board Governance Committee Meeting

MINUTES

Attendance: Commissioner Powell (Chair) and Commissioners White and Cruz. Parent Representative: Betsy Rice. District Staff: Joyce Martelli, Jerome Underwood, Tim Cliby, Chuck Johnson. Board Staff: Debra Flanagan

Commissioner Powell convened the meeting at 5:33 p.m.

I. Questions & Answers regarding RCSD Budget

Joyce Martelli reported that the NYS budget was just approved and did not reduce funding to the District any more than had been anticipated (\$19m). On a positive note, she stated that the federal government just approved Education Jobs funding, for which New York State submitted an application two days ago. Ms. Martelli indicated that a decision should be made in the next two weeks, and the State is determining the way in which these funds are to be allocated. She stated that there are indications that the allocations to districts will be 42% of the governor's proposed budget gap, which would amount to \$8m for RCSD. However, the final amount and the manner in which the funds will be provided are not yet known. Ms. Martelli stated that she hopes the funds will be allowed for use in FY2011-12, as this will help to replace the loss of the federal stimulus funds in that year.

Commissioner White asked whether information will be presented to the Board regarding Education Jobs funding and when this might be expected. Ms. Martelli confirmed that a presentation will be given to the Finance Committee, but the timing cannot be determined at this point because the guidelines have not yet been provided.

II. Review and Approve Minutes of July 15, 2010 Finance Committee Meeting

Motion by Commissioner White to approve the minutes of the July 15th Finance Committee meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

III. Review of Proposed Resolutions for August 26, 2010 Board Business Meeting

Commissioner Powell requested that an overview be provided of all of the instructional technology resolutions, particularly the way in which each of these would be used to benefit the District.

A. INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

1. Compass Learning, Inc. - (Resolution No. 2010-11: 111)

Tim Cliby explained that perpetual licenses were obtained for use of the Compass program in all but nine elementary schools, which had been using Achieve 3000, a competitor program. Both programs are designed to enable teachers to track student progress and tailor assignments to individual students for ELA and Math in English and Spanish. He stated that Achieve 3000 has made it difficult for the District to maintain licensing because the company will only allow for a one-year lease, which substantially increases the cost. For this reason, the remaining nine schools were asked to switch to the Compass program. This resolution will allow the purchase of a perpetual license for the remaining nine schools, which will enable the District to own the software for all elementary schools.

2. Scientific Learning Corporation – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 112)

Mr. Cliby stated that Scientific Learning Corporation provides the Fast Forward program to enhance literacy for students with auditory processing problems. He noted that Houghton Mifflin provides a similar program, Earobics. Mr. Cliby described the same type of licensing issues in that Scientific Learning Corporation will only allow leasing of licenses and also did not have a web-based platform, thereby limiting its use and capability. However, the company has recently modified the program for use on the web and the District has already invested a significant amount in Fast Forward in six schools. For these reasons, the District does not want to completely discontinue the program. Instead, the Earobics program will be expanded for use in all other schools as a less costly alternative.

3. Thinkronize, Inc. – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 113)

Mr. Cliby explained that this resolution is for three software products which operate in tandem. The entire package will be funded through an Enhancing Education through Technology Grant, which is a part of the federal stimulus funding. He stated that negotiations were conducted to purchase a three-year license for this software package so that it would be paid in advance through 2013.

Net Trekker is an educational filter which selects websites and webpages according to themes being taught in class and categorizes web materials by grade level to ensure that appropriate content is provided to each student.

BrainPOP provides animated, curriculum-based content to engage students and provide instructional resources to teachers and is based on NYS standards.

School Town is an online class site in which teachers can post materials and assignments, as well as assist students outside of the classroom. Students are able to obtain additional guidance from teachers outside of the classroom, and to engage in discussions with each other. All of these features on the Internet act to extend the school day beyond the classroom.

Commissioner White commented on the number of software packages and programs for students, noting that none of this was available in his youth and yet there was a skilled, educated and globally competitive workforce. He questioned the necessity for all of these programs.

Mr. Cliby replied that the Information Age has created an exponential growth in the amount of information available, and new skills are required to be able to determine useful and meaningful information. He also emphasized the need to keep competitive with suburban districts by ensuring that RCSD students have access to the same software and teachers to the same type of training.

Commissioner White expressed concern regarding reliance on ready-made technological packages and solutions at the expense of students developing creativity, resourcefulness, and imagination.

4. CTB/McGraw-Hill, LLC – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 114)

Mr. Cliby stated that this company provides the Acuity Benchmark Assessment System, which scans paper and pencil assessments and provides results as soon as the student has completed the assessment. This allows teachers to tailor their approach based on the student's abilities as indicated in the assessment. Without this electronic capability, teachers were not receiving the assessment results in a timely fashion and therefore did not have the opportunity to adapt their instruction to the individual student's needs.

5. KC Distance Learning, Inc. – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 115)

Mr. Cliby noted that this online credit recovery system has been quite successful in assisting students toward graduation: with 90 licenses obtained last year for the pilot program, more than 45 students obtained at least one credit through this online program.

The current resolution is to expand the program by purchasing 1000 licenses for one year and which will offer the entire core curriculum online.

Commissioner White commented on problems in NYC with their online credit recovery program because there were no academic standards, and asked how this problem will be prevented by RCSD. Glen VanDerwater explained that NYS enacted new regulations regarding standards for online credit recovery programs and a teacher has to be assigned to direct and monitor each student's learning in this program. He pointed out that this arrangement allows the District to expand the class to the extent that teachers are assigned to students in the online credit recovery program who are not actually physically present in the classroom.

Commissioner Powell inquired as to the way in which students are prevented from tying up licenses by failing to progress in the online program. Mr. VanDerwater reported that this is an important aspect of his job, and that he monitors enrollment and student participation on a daily basis. If a student has not logged into the

program for a period of time, they will be dropped unless there are mitigating circumstances (e.g. illness).

Parent Representative Betsy Rice questioned whether this online program could be offered to students as a preventive measure to keep them from failing a class. Mr. VanDerwater replied that the program could be used if a student has not been able to attend class due to extenuating circumstances (e.g. illness) and noted the benefits from students being able to ask questions privately and without embarrassment as compared to a classroom situation. He emphasized the importance of distinguishing between credit recovery and internal credits, as the State is quite strict in regulating use of the online program and only allows a maximum of 10.5 credits to be earned in this way.

6. BOCES No. 1 – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 116)

Mr. Cliby explained that this resolution would allow video conferencing at 14 locations in the District, which provides cost savings through reducing the use of travel. BOCES No. 1 provides technical support for the video conferencing network.

7. Discovery Education, Inc. – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 117)

Mr. Cliby described substantial resources available through Discovery Education to supplement instruction and provide lesson plans, quizzes, and assignments for teachers to use in the classroom. Streaming of programs through Discovery presents educational materials in a way that is not otherwise accessible. All of the educational resources are aligned and mapped to the Rochester curriculum.

8. NBC Universal, Inc. – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 118)

Similar to the resources provided through Discovery Education, the educational materials provided by NBC Universal would be utilized by social studies teachers and are also aligned and will be mapped to the Rochester curriculum.

9. Lincoln Learning Solutions, LLC – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 119)

Mr. Cliby stated that the software program from Lincoln Learning Solutions would assist in phonics and reading development for early childhood ELA or for English Language learners (ELL).

10. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 120)

This resolution is for the Earobics software program to assist in literacy development for students with auditory processing difficulties. It was discussed as an alternative to the software program Fast Forward from Compass Learning, Inc.

Motion by Commissioner White to consider all above Instructional Technology resolutions as a group. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

Motion by Commissioner White to approve all above Instructional Technology resolutions. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

B. PROCUREMENT

- 1. Athletic Supplies & Equipment – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 121)**
- 2. D&H Distributing Company – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 122)**
- 3. Football Equipment & Helmets – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 123)**
- 4. Erie 1 BOCES Western NY Regional Information Center – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 124)**

Motion by Commissioner Cruz to consider all above procurement resolutions as a group. Seconded by Commissioner White. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

Motion by Commissioner Cruz to approve all above procurement resolutions. Seconded by Commissioner White. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

C. FACILITIES

Lease Agreement

- 1. University of Rochester, Memorial Art Gallery – parking for the School of the Arts – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 110)**

Final Payments

- 2. Jupiter Environmental Services, Inc. – asbestos abatement at Jefferson High School - (Resolution No. 2010-11: 106)**
- 3. Landry Mechanical Contractors – mechanical work at School No. 33 – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 107)**
- 4. Landry Mechanical Contractors – plumbing work at Thomas P. Ryan Community Center and Library and at School No. 33 – (Resolution No. 2010-11: 108)**

Motion by Commissioner White to consider all above Facilities resolutions as a group. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

Motion by Commissioner White to approve all above Facilities resolutions. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

IV. Review of Finance Policies

Commissioner Powell noted that the proposed revision to the Budget policy (6110) and the Budget Adoption policy (6130) were to be reviewed by the Administration for comment after the July 15, 2010 Finance Committee meeting.

A. Budget policy (6110)

Chuck Johnson stated that he had reviewed these policy proposals with Ms. Martelli and the Superintendent, and suggested additional changes to the proposed Budget policy (6110). Specifically, he noted that the Administration does not want to specify the groups to be included in soliciting input regarding the proposed budget. Ms. Martelli asserted that the public would learn of the proposed budget at the same time that it is presented to the Board, and that opportunity is offered after that for comment.

Commissioner Powell contended that there is a fundamental difference between obtaining input from affected groups as part of developing the budget, compared to allowing their comment after it has already been presented.

Commissioner White expressed preference for retaining the original policy proposal because it directs the Board to interact and reach out to constituent groups who often feel ignored, and this has negatively affected these critical working relationships. He noted that the Superintendent is not required to accept all of the input offered, but must allow opportunity for their concerns to be heard. Commissioner White contended that this is critical to improving relationships with key stakeholders in the District.

Commissioner Cruz cautioned against specifying the groups to be included, as the names may change and thereby render the policy obsolete.

Commissioner White noted that the proposed language states: “The vehicle for interaction with constituent groups can include, but is not limited to....” He pointed out that this language allows flexibility in determining the specific groups which should be included in providing input into the budget.

Mr. Johnson stated that the Administration considers the Board to be the first group that should comment on the proposed budget, as the Board is the ultimate authority in the District.

Commissioner White replied that the Board is stipulating through this policy that their priority is to consider the perspective of constituent groups in the process of developing the budget. He asserted that this inclusion would greatly facilitate the entire process because all affected parties would have an opportunity to have their concerns considered.

Parent Representative Betsy Rice stated that she would appreciate the opportunity to have input as a parent in terms of District priorities for funding, and that including affected groups could be helpful to District staff in guiding the budget development process. She cited an example of her daughter potentially losing the opportunity to take Advanced Placement Literature classes, but having the choice of tap dance or regular physical

education class next year. Ms. Rice stated that if she had the opportunity, she would have advocated for the AP Literature class and fewer options for physical education.

Commissioner White commented that he would be willing to accept the proposed revisions from the Administration, but would be asking pointed questions in the next budget cycle to ensure that affected groups have had an opportunity to express their concerns and priorities in developing the budget.

Motion by Commissioner White to incorporate proposed revisions from Administration into the Budget policy proposal (6110) to advance to the Policy Committee. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

B. Budget Adoption policy (6130)

Mr. Johnson reported that the Administration was amenable to the revisions proposed to the Budget Adoption policy (6130), which simply reflect current practice in allowing the Board to adopt the budget in any type of meeting, rather than only in a Special Meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Cruz to approve the Budget Adoption policy proposal (6130). Seconded by Commissioner White. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

C. Investment policy (6240)

Commissioner Powell noted that this policy is proposed to be revised to reflect the fact that RCSD is fiscally dependent upon the City to manage its investments. She stated that the current policy is incorrect and refers to independent school districts.

Mr. Johnson replied that the Administration would not have any objections to making this policy revision, since it is essentially a correction and statement of fact.

Motion by Commissioner White to approve proposed revision to Investment policy (6240) to advance to the Policy Committee. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

D. Financial Accountability policy (6XXX)

Commissioner Powell explained that this is a new policy proposal which would describe the Board's mechanisms for fiscal oversight and accountability: the Code of Ethics, Audit Committee, Internal Auditor, and Claims Auditor.

Mr. Johnson stated that he and Ms. Martelli had just completed reviewing the Financial Accountability policy proposal and offered some suggestions for further revision.

Motion by Commissioner Cruz to table consideration of the Financial Accountability policy until the next Finance Committee meeting on September 16th to allow time for review of the Administration's suggestions. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

Motion by Commissioner Cruz to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner White. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:14PM.

**Next Finance Committee Meeting: September 16th, immediately following the Board
Governance Committee meeting**