

**Rochester Board of Education
Finance Committee Of the Whole
April 12, 2005 at 6:00 P.M.
Minutes**

Attendance: Commissioners Brown, Evans, Garcia, Porter, Powell and Thompson; Dr. Rivera; Ms. Rohring; Mr. Marini; Mr. Cliby; Mr. Silver

Absent: Commissioner Bowers

Commissioner Powell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
Commissioner Thompson arrived at 6:04 p.m.
Dr. Rivera joined the meeting at 6:05 p.m.
Commissioner Porter arrived at 6:13 p.m.

I. Technology

Q. Mr. Marini asked Commissioners Evans and Garcia when they would be able to participate in the next technology breakfast?

Commissioner Evans

A. Thursday's are good. Friday's are not, although Friday mornings are good, but I have a conference call later in the day.

Commissioner Garcia

Q. I saw your Technology Competency Survey. I am very concerned we have a lot of people who really need a lot of training pretty quick. How are we going to accommodate those needs? The survey was very good; it gave you a good sense of where we are and who can do what more or less. With all of this new technology, is training going to be a part of the technology plan? Based on the survey, we need some extensive training just to teach people how to turn on the computer.

A. We will have to reach out to the teachers, principals and admitting that a lot of people in our Information Technology Department do not have the skills because they have been here for 30+ years and mainframe dependent when we are moving away from mainframe in about a year or two. The new student management system, the new special education system, PeopleSoft is all web-enabled, and it's a different type of technology. We do not have an exact training schedule for some of these people. Training is mixed; vendor and internal training falls under professional development.

Commissioner Powell

Q. Has there been a staffing decrease in Instructional Technology?

A. Mr. Cliby stated yes, one teacher was cut due to a decrease in Title IID funding – this individual retired and was not replaced. Mr. Marini stated this allowed for vacancy savings in the budget by not shifting the cost to the local fund.

Commissioner Powell asked if the Board should consider adding back that position.

Commissioner Garcia

Q. How much is it going to cost for training?

A. Mr. Cliby - Actually this answer depends more on the solution and the scope of need. By that I mean, do we staff every building with an application person (say the current AIS people) or do we scale out current delivery by Instructional Technology, which leads to another question, who do you staff that scale out with, teachers or temps? I think the temp solution is suitable if you can get good people. (one person we have now with PeopleSoft is Mitchell who has had good reviews in the schools, he and others with similar skills are a good fit). Second part of the answer is what “training” are we identifying; Skill training or application training? I suspect both. My estimations is that if we brought on 5 trainers in a full time capacity we could get at all of the elementary schools within the next two years. Could we get things done faster? Yes but then we would have to also scale the technology deployment so add another \$1 million in expenses next year, beyond my budget.

Q. Why was staff across the entire district not required to fill out survey and send back in?

A. Mr. Cliby - I cannot require the staff to do anything, neither can the principal for that matter. We can appeal to their sense of good judgment by making the effort to be at their staff meetings, to personally hand out the surveys, to facilitate collection of the surveys and impart the importance of these surveys, all of which we did. The percentage collected was a good sample size and we are finding that it is right on target with what we are seeing in the implementation.

Roll Out Phase I

As we work with the first 1/3 of the schools we have mandated that this be a School Based Planning initiative and we have collected assessments for all of the certified staff in these buildings, this is the basis for the individualized plans for each certified staff member.

Dr. Rivera stated that the district has a detailed technology roll out plan of where we are, where we are going and where we would like to be a year, two years or three years from now. Here are the systems we want to put into place, hardware, software. Every school should have a full time IT person and trainers. We will have a more intensive plan for trainers/IT personnel, so this will cost us much more than \$70,000 or \$80,000. We are putting together a living plan. Training staff is a big part of the plan. If you are going to be in education in the district, you are going to have to learn to use technology. This is a discussion that is large. This is a huge investment. Training needs to be done in schools/on premises. There have to be standards put into place. Technology standards need to be put in place for all administrators, teachers, staff, etc. Yes, evaluation will be built in as well. Most schools are more than prepared to move forward with technology and these are the schools that we want to jump on and move forward.

Commissioner Garcia stated that there should be a comprehensive training plan in the district accepted by the district, the unions, and staff. And new requirements for entering into the district should include computer literacy. If they are not they will have a problem getting a job. And the teachers/staff already here need to be prepared as well because technology is passing them by and they need to step out of the way. That is a recommendation.

Commissioner Brown

Q. Will this disappear with younger teachers/through attrition? Can we out-source some of the training? Can we offer this training online as we do to purchase supplies?

A. Mr. Cliby stated all online training. Element K is online training. Some of the hardware needs to be replaced. This is what we are working on now. With an upgrade to elementary school computer labs, we set out a rigorous training plan staff had to commit to.

Commissioner Garcia stated the District needs a comprehensive training plan, accepted by the unions and staff; incoming teachers should have technology competence.

Dr. Rivera noted that it is too early to know what training can be contracted out.

Commissioner Thompson conveyed that she was glad to see things coming together and the district moving forward.

Commissioner Porter

Will this be part of teachers/staff performance evaluation?

A. Dr. Rivera responded - We do have a detailed roll-out plan, where we are now and where we want to be. There will be a living document which is a three-year plan. If we have agreement with the unions, then it will be part of their evaluation.

II. Revenue, Expenses, Office of Superintendent, Division of Business Services

Commissioner Evans

Q. Purchasing efficiencies. Staples online procurement opposed to items at the Storehouse and how is it controlled by the district?

A. Mr. Marini - About a year ago we put supply ordering online which lowered inventory costs at the Storehouse. Recently we partnered with W.W. Grainger for our maintenance repair and operations type items. We are working with Dell to have our computer purchases online, as opposed to going through the paper process; we have standards for desktops and laptops. As we implement requisition to pay module with PeopleSoft next year, those products would be further enhanced to the efficiencies in the procurement area.

Q. So it has translated into savings already? Real dollars?

A. Mr. Marini - It has by increasing customer satisfaction. And we have standards, i.e., what can be ordered pens and pencils, on type and pricing.

Commissioner Powell

Q. Changing over from the warehouse system to the online ordering has been successful?

A. Mr. Marini - Items are wasted that sit on the shelf for years. For example, there were erasers that broke apart when they were picked up. If you look at holding items on the shelf and not being able to use, it ends up costing the district more.

Commissioner Thompson

It's wonderful to know that we are getting to where we need to be from last year. We need to review the timeline for submitting budget questions. It is an improved budget review process.

Commissioner Thompson left the meeting at 6:43 p.m.

Commissioner Garcia

Q. How is the online ordering system controlled? Who orders? Who looks at the items ordered to make sure they are legitimate?

A. Mr. Marini - Staples have been contracted by the district. A group of secretaries from the district work with them to decide on the items that could be ordered. A supervisor has to approve the items/order and funds must be available in budget.

Q. Business services, last year there were a lot of vacancies, do you still have a lot of vacancies?

A. Mr. Marini - We are getting better. We almost have a full staff in the Finance area. Have done some interviewing the past few weeks. No CIO as of yet, but we are doing a nationwide search and would like to have position filled by July.

Q. Dr. Rivera have you made realignments in staffing?

A. Dr. Rivera - Yes, I will share the first draft in executive session on Thursday evening.

Q. Nurses/EPE – where are they in the legislature?

A. Evans stated that they are working on the issue from his conversation with Gantt. It has not been introduced in the Senate.

Dr. Rivera stated that everything is positive. If the bill stays as it is, it calls for a revenue from the public health fund. But there are some issues that it is wiser to seek reimbursement as a BOCES provider. A new bill may be required.

The other good news we had was on transportation, the late file will be taken care, which means \$500,000 in revenue to the District.

Commissioner Porter

Q. Is there a plan B if legislation falls through?

A. Mr. Marini - \$1.2M on the nurses and \$2.1M on EPE, so that would eat up what we have set aside for our fund balance. We would have no reserves.

Commissioner Evans stated there have been no negative vibes that this will not go through. David Gantt is working the items. What is not clear is the Senate? But we will trust Gantt.

Q. Are there any other charter schools opening for next year?

A. Dr. Rivera - One for 05-06 and two closing. There could be more opening. One of the possibilities is us running a conversion/charter schools?

We are working on contract schools and hopefully the Gates Foundation will help us with funding. Conversion charter schools could work; there are different options that could work. Contract schools would be run by the district and not take money out of the district as Charter schools do.

Commissioner Powell

Q. Do we have enough staff to get all of the grants that we should be getting? How many grant writers do we have? How do we compare to other districts? Can we find a sympathetic person in another district that may have some insight? Are there any agencies that we could use to assist in finding grants and funding?

A. Mr. Silver - We have three grant writers and part of the problems is that requires enormous efforts. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of our time is maintenance (reporting), we do not have the staff to scout for new grants, and we spend much of our time responding to New York State Education Department. We do not have enough staff to do the extensive searching that needs to be done.

Dr. Rivera stated there are great opportunities from grant and foundations that would be helpful to this district. There are firms in DC that can assist us, but they will take a percentage of funding that they find for us.

Commissioner Garcia

Q. Last year after visiting a school, I was amazed at the amount of food thrown away and why the kids are not eating it and why they do not like the food? What is the difference between the pizzas at the high school level as opposed to elementary?

A. Mr. Marini - We have someone making some wonderful changes to our food service. We have a management firm working on this now and we are looking at what needs to be changed, nutrition wise, antiquated point of sale systems. And we will see some of this in the 2005-06 school year. We need a lot of technology updates. Pizzas are from different vendors.

Next set of questions due April 22, 2005

Next Meeting – April 28, 2005 at 6:00 p.m. for Board Budget Deliberations

Adjournment:

Commissioner Evans motioned to adjourn. **Commissioner Porter** seconded. Adopted 5-0 with Commissioners Bowers and Thompson absent.

Meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.