

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting
February 18, 2016

Attending: Malik Evans (Chair); Commissioners Hallmark, Adams and White.

Parent Representative: Toyin Anderson

District Staff: Chuck Goodykoontz, Project Manager for Summer School; Joseph Baldino, Executive Director of Operations and Instruction; Elizabeth Hanan, Director of Art Education; Andrew MacGowan, Project Administrator; Ray Giamartino, Chief of School Transformation; Ruth Turner, Director of School Counseling & Social Work; Michele Alberti, Executive Director of the Office of School Innovation; Carrie Pecor, Associate Director of Instructional Technology.

Community Representative: Bill Chandler, Arts Integration Project Coordinator

Board Staff: Debra Flanagan

Commissioner Evans called the meeting to order at 6:42PM.

I. Review Minutes of January 21, 2016 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting

Commissioner Hallmark stated that there appears to be an error in the minutes of the January 21, 2016 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee meeting. She read the following section of the meeting minutes:

“Commissioner Hallmark inquired about the number of visits per year by the Teaching Artists in the Arts Integration project. Mr. MacGowan replied that the Teaching Artists visited ten times over the course of the school year.”

Commissioner Hallmark asked whether this statement in the meeting minutes is accurate. Elizabeth Hanan replied that it is an accurate statement. Commissioner Hallmark sought clarification as to whether the ten visits by Teaching Artists were for each classroom. Ms. Hanan replied that the Teaching Artists visited each classroom ten times during the school year.

Motion by Commissioner Hallmark to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2016 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting, with the addition of “per classroom” to the above statement. **Adopted 2-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

II. Analysis of Outcome Data for the Arts Integration Project

Andy MacGowan and Elizabeth Hanan discussed the findings from the arts integration project, which was implemented in 10 RCSD elementary schools from 2010-14. The schools participating in the project were randomly selected, and academic performance was compared

with the remaining District elementary schools. Mr. MacGowan reported that growth in student academic achievement was found consistently for each grade level for each year of the study, with the greatest gains among students in kindergarten, 5th grade, and 6th grade. He stated that the specific art modality used with students in these grades seems to have been a particularly good fit in terms of students' level of development and learning: kindergarten and music, 5th grade and music, and 6th grade and drama. He stated that the benefits of the specific art modality used at other grade levels was less certain or apparent.

Mr. MacGowan reported that a particularly significant finding was that students participating in arts integration in low-performing schools gained academically to a greater extent than those in higher performing schools. He stated that this result indicates that arts integration can serve as a "protective" factor for students not fortunate enough to attend a higher performing school.

Elizabeth Hanan described the essential components of the arts integration project: 1) Teaching Artists involved in teaching ELA and Math; 2) High-quality professional development for classroom teachers to build internal capacity to implement arts integration; 3) Students' art learning experiences in the community, which were connected to the curriculum.

Kindergarten:

Mr. MacGowan described the study results at the kindergarten level for specific student subgroups based on race, ethnicity and gender. He reported that the greatest gains were found among Latina and African American girls in science, language and literacy as a result of participation in the arts integration project. He stated that boys also experienced academic gains from involvement in arts integration, but to a lesser extent than girls.

Mr. MacGowan stated that large, but uneven results were observed for students with disabilities at the kindergarten level. However, the small number of students in this group may have led to a failure to attain statistical significance.

Mr. MacGowan reported that English-Language Learner (ELL) kindergarten students experienced significant gains in the arts integration project, particularly in initiative, music, and movement.

5th Grade:

Academic growth for 5th-grade students participating in the arts integration project was seen for two consecutive years, although Mr. MacGowan stated that it would be preferable to see these results over three consecutive years to indicate a trend. He noted that 96% more of the 5th grade students in the arts integration project obtained a passing score on the NYS ELA exam than their peers in other District schools. Mr. MacGowan reported that 51% more 5th grade students in the project passed the NYS Math exam than their counterparts in the control group.

Among the 5th grade subgroups, Mr. MacGowan stated that the highest percentage passing the NYS ELA exam (30.8%) and NYS Math exam (42.6%) were white students.

6th Grade:

For 6th grade students, 173% more students in the Arts Integration project passed the NYS ELA exam than those in the control group. For the NYS Math exam, 94% more 6th grade students participating in the project obtained at least a passing score than their counterparts in the control group. Mr. MacGowan noted that further research is needed to identify the specific factors affecting the large gains in student achievement in 6th grade. He stated that several possible explanations have been presented:

- » Students are learning skills in earlier grades, which become integrated and applied effectively by 6th grade.
- » Arts integration removes some of the negative attitudes toward school that tends to emerge among students at about the 6th grade level.
- » The mode of art used for 6th grade students (theater) in the arts integration project was an exceptionally good fit at this stage of development, thereby boosting academic growth.

Mr. MacGowan reported that 6.56% of 6th grade students with disabilities passed the NYS Math exam, compared to 2.08% of the students in the control schools. He stated that the only area in which ELL students passed NYS assessments was at the 6th grade level, and only in Math.

Other Significant Findings:

- In 3rd grade, 59% more African American students involved in the arts integration project passed the NYS ELA exam than their peers in other District schools
- The number of ELL students in third grade who passed the NYS Math assessment was 13 times greater for those in the arts integration project than those in other District schools (8.18% v. 0.5%).
- Gains were realized from participating in the arts integration project in the percentage of students passing the NYS ELA and Math assessment at all grade levels and for all student subgroups, except for groups that had small numbers of students and the gains in exam scores did not reach statistical significance.

Commissioner Hallmark inquired about the racial and ethnic diversity of the Teaching Artists involved in the Arts Integration project, noting that this could have a significant impact on student engagement and academic outcomes.

Action Item: Andy MacGowan will provide information to the members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee regarding the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the Teaching Artists involved in the Arts Integration project.

Commissioner Hallmark recalled that there were difficulties in obtaining Teaching Artists in the Arts Integration project, which may also affect diversity and outcomes on student achievement. Mr. MacGowan clarified that obtaining Teaching Artists was primarily an issue in terms of

expanding arts integration to all District elementary schools.

Commissioner Hallmark inquired about the arts organizations involved in the project, and the extent to which the same Teaching Artists were retained throughout the four years of the project. Bill Chandler reported that the vast majority of Teaching Artists remained for the entire duration of the project.

Commissioner Hallmark emphasized the importance of clearly defining “arts integration” in terms of the staff involved, professional development, the number of hours and frequency of involvement by each staff member and Teaching Artist to enable replication with full-scale implementation and to ensure at least the same level of effectiveness as with the pilot project.

Action Item: Andy MacGowan will provide a clear definition of “arts integration”, including the methods used to integrate the arts into the curriculum and classroom instruction, staff roles and responsibilities, frequency and duration of interaction with students, and professional development.

Ms. Hanan pointed out that it is quite rare to obtain clear evidence of such large gains in student achievement for a pilot program or initiative, particularly for a relatively reasonable cost. She discussed some of the important lessons learned from the Arts Integration project:

- The need to provide feedback to teachers on a timely basis to inform their instruction. She pointed out that the data is from 2013-14, and the analysis has just now been completed. Ms. Hanan noted that a system would have to be developed to facilitate data compilation and analysis if arts integration is implemented district-wide.
- A plan for building capacity for RCSD teachers to implement arts integration on a regular basis, with and without Teaching Artists.
- Methods for improving the efficacy of arts integration for students in grades 1- 4.

Ms. Hanan estimated that partial implementation of arts integration with 50% of classroom teachers teaming with Teaching Artists and providing this integrated curriculum to all RCSD elementary students would cost approximately \$900K. She stated that full-scale implementation throughout the District, with Teaching Artists teaming with all elementary classroom teachers, would amount to approximately \$1.4M in costs. This would include high-quality professional development for all elementary classroom teachers and alignment of arts integration with the curriculum and standards.

Commissioner Evans recommended sharing the findings of the Arts Integration project with the members of the Finance Committee and the Superintendent, so that district-wide implementation can be considered for inclusion in the 2016-17 RCSD budget. He emphasized the fact that an independent evaluator obtained these findings, indicating the real potential for arts integration to significantly improve student achievement in the District.

Mr. MacGowan pointed out that the cost of district-wide implementation could be offset to the extent that arts integration results in fewer students needing remediation. He reported that 169

school districts applied for the federal grant for the arts integration study, and only 25 districts were selected. Mr. MacGowan stated that the Rochester City School District ranked first in terms of evaluation methodology, which lends even greater significance to the project findings.

Commissioner White remarked that such clear and demonstrable results are rarely found in education initiatives, and these initiatives need to be incorporated into the District's struggling schools. He pointed out that the findings from this study indicate the effectiveness particularly in lower performing schools, making the case for full implementation even more compelling.

Commissioner Evans noted that district-wide implementation of arts integration represents a proactive, positive investment in student education, rather than a substantial expenditure for remediation after students have failed to perform up to standards. He added that this is particularly important for ELL students and students with disabilities.

III. Presentation regarding RCSD Summer Learning Programs

Chuck Goodykoontz discussed the status of RCSD summer learning programs over the last several years, noting that 11,900 students enrolled in one of these programs in the summer of 2015. He stated that this represents just over 95% of the goal of 12,500 students participating last year, and the goal for summer 2016 is 15,000 students. Mr. Goodykoontz noted that these figures include students in need of enrichment, remediation, or credit recovery. He added that 22% of students with disabilities and 14% of ELL students attended an RCSD summer learning program in 2015.

Mr. Goodykoontz described a new process that was established in 2015 to require an application for summer learning programs, which facilitates planning and preparation for instructional and operations staff. He stated that summer learning opportunities are quite varied and include district-wide programs, school-based programs, and programs through community partners. Mr. Goodykoontz reported that 70 program proposals have been received for summer 2016, which are currently being evaluated. He stated that some degree of consolidation among these programs is expected and will be finalized within the next few weeks.

Mr. Goodykoontz also discussed a number of changes that were made last year to improve summer learning programs in the District:

- » Defined governance structure to enable instructional and operational staff to focus on their particular area of expertise.
- » Development of a summer program charter, which identifies goals and measures to be used to evaluate student learning. Consistency is particularly important among district-wide, school-based and community partner programs.
- » Use of Spring and Fall NWEA test results to evaluate summer learning and program effectiveness.
- » Improved coordination of program start and end times to enhance the efficiency of transportation and food services.

- » Housing summer programs in schools that will not have construction through the Capital Improvement Plan or Facilities Modernization Plan, and in buildings that have air conditioning.
- » Formation of a Summer Sustainability Team

Mr. Goodykoontz reported that 59% of students attending summer learning programs in 2015 had no summer learning loss or actually increased their score on the NWEA Math assessment, compared to 48% of students who did not attend a summer program. On the NWEA Reading assessment, 64% of students attending a summer learning program had no learning loss or actually raised their score from Spring 2015 to Fall 2015. This compares to just 55% of students who did not attend a summer program in 2015.

Among students who experienced some learning loss over the summer of 2015, the extent of the learning loss was greater for students who did not participate in a summer program.

Mr. Goodykoontz noted that attendance rates for students who participated in summer learning in 2015 are approximately 2% higher to date for the school year than those who did not attend a summer program last year. He added that attendance rates for summer programs have increased significantly over the last year, from 67% in 2014 to 79% in 2015.

Commissioner White observed that the students attending the 2015 Summer Language Academy experienced the greatest gains in reading, compared to the results for all of the other summer programs. He inquired about the District's plan to examine the methods used in the Summer Learning Academy to try to replicate these practices in other programs. Mr. Goodykoontz replied that one of the changes to the governance structure was to try to bring synergies of elementary programs together and promote sharing of best practices.

Commissioner White pointed to the relatively poor performance in reading for the ELA Math Institute at Northeast/Northwest College Preparatory Academy, and questioned whether the District would contract with this program in the future. Mr. Goodykoontz noted that math was the primary focus of this program, in which students performed quite well.

Commissioner White asked whether the District would consider contracting with this provider only for math in the future, or provide coaching to improve their reading performance. Dr. Giamartino described the District's review of the summer learning data to inform future practice. He noted that the data led to a decision to increase the number of Reading Teachers in summer programs to enrich and enhance components of literacy integration. Dr. Giamartino explained that the District is currently assessing summer learning proposals and considering whether to invite organizations in under-performing programs to participate in the future. He emphasized the importance of ensuring the contributive value of all programs.

Mr. Baldino added that some summer programs with low attendance rates have been eliminated, and a cost/benefit analysis is performed to examine the value of each program to the District.

Dr. Giamartino discussed the professional development offered to staff in summer programs,

noting that the Innovation Greenhouse provides an opportunity for teachers to observe model classes and best practices at the end of each day. He stated that administrators visit classrooms the following morning to provide timely feedback to teachers about strengths and specific areas in need of improvement.

Commissioner Hallmark questioned whether there is an underlying assumption that the composition of students and academic achievement levels were essentially the same for each of the summer programs. Dr. Giamartino stated that the students in the Innovation Greenhouse were balanced in terms of gender, student performance, and percentage of students with disabilities.

Commissioner Hallmark inquired about the methods for enrolling students in the various summer programs. Dr. Giamartino replied that these programs included students who were identified by their teachers as struggling, as well as students in need of enrichment.

Mr. Goodykoontz provided a breakdown of the costs associated with the summer learning programs for 2015: 56% for staff salaries and benefits; 16% for transportation; 12% for tuition; 11% for services through BOCES; 3% for professional and technical development; and 1% for instructional supplies. He stated that the total cost was approximately \$8.6M.

Mr. Goodykoontz discussed future plans to improve summer programs:

- Continue to improve staffing formulas;
- Use student performance dashboards;
- Utilize data analytics to improve decision-making and measure results for summer programs;
- Create an academic return on investment scorecard, particularly since there is considerable variation in the time period and cost of summer programs
- Coordinate communications with City summer recreation programs, so students are aware of all opportunities available
- Provide transportation to students from summer learning programs to City recreation centers to address student needs holistically

Commissioner Evans observed that coordinating summer learning with City recreation centers would provide a great opportunity to promote student engagement.

Mr. Goodykoontz described several challenges with which Board members could assist, primarily in encouraging students to register for summer programs by May 20th to facilitate appropriate staffing levels, transportation and other services to be in place. He also asked Board members to continue to encourage student attendance.

Commissioner Hallmark commented on the “Summer Sustainability Team”, and asked how information obtained about students over the summer is conveyed to their teachers in the fall. She pointed out that this information would be most valuable for teachers to have in advance to prepare their lessons at the beginning of the school year. Ms. Alberti stated that this type of information exchange and coordination has been performed by overlapping teachers’ schedules

in August to facilitate communication between summer program teachers and classroom teachers. She clarified that the “Summer Sustainability Team” refers to terminology that was used under a former Wallace Foundation grant in finding ways to continue to prevent summer learning loss.

IV. Discussion of Projected Graduation Rates for 2015-16

Ruth Turner explained that the graduation rate projections are based on an audit of student transcripts that was conducted in September 2015 for the 2012 cohort, which is expected to graduate in June 2016. After the review of each student’s transcript and data element, a meeting was held with school leaders to discuss specific efforts needed to assist students currently not on track to graduate on time. Ms. Turner described collaborating with school administrators to identify the specific academic and social/emotional supports needed by each student and the importance of ensuring their enrollment in courses needed to graduate. She stated that enrollment in summer learning programs was discussed with principals to assist struggling students.

Ms. Turner described a number of efforts to assist students in getting on track to graduate in time: Regents exam review conducted on Saturdays and during school breaks, and offering online credit recovery at alternate times and locations. She stated that transcripts were also reviewed with parents to aid their understanding of their child’s current academic status, and to enable parents to advocate to ensure that their child’s needs are met. Ms. Turner reported that school counselors are tracking each student each marking period, and meeting with students to discuss their progress and make referrals to alternative programs (e.g. All City High School).

Commissioner Evans observed that East High School students were not included in this report, yet their performance will have a significant impact on the District’s overall graduation rate.

Action Item: Data regarding graduation rate projections for East High School students will be presented to the members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee. Changes in projected graduation rates for 2015-16 based on inclusion of data from East High School will also be reported to Committee members.

Ms. Turner noted that the 2012 cohort consists of approximately 2100 students, and approximately 1000 of these students are on track to graduate in June 2016. Students deemed to be on track to graduate have at least 16 credits and have passed at least 3 Regents exams at this point. Ms. Turner reported that the currently available data indicate a projected graduation rate for June of approximately 47%, with an additional 5-6% expected to graduate in August 2016.

Commissioner White insisted that the District must do better to improve student academic performance, particularly since the graduation rate has been stagnant for the last 3-4 years. He emphasized the importance of giving hope to students and families in terms of prospects and opportunities for the future. Commissioner White urged the District to determine the specific actions needed to realize substantial improvements in academic performance for students.

Ms. Turner described a number of efforts that have been made to assist students in getting back on track to graduate in time: offering opportunities for online credit recovery, providing

transportation to students to attend classes and online credit recovery at flexible times and locations, and diligently examining the factors affecting student performance to overcome barriers to achievement.

V. Regents Exam Results for Students in Online Credit Recovery Courses

Adele Bovard discussed the use of online credit recovery to assist students in graduating on time, thereby raising the District's graduation rate. She stated that this is the first year that the online credit recovery program has been systematically implemented in all RCSD high schools.

Carrie Pecor introduced herself, stating that she is the Assistant Director of Instructional Technology and her focus has been on developing a Virtual Academy for the District. From comparison of data for students in online credit recovery courses and for those in traditional classroom settings, a correlation was found between online credit recovery and student performance on the January Regents exams. Ms. Pecor pointed out that the majority of students in online credit recovery courses were still in the process of completing their courses when the January Regents exams were administered, and the course content related to the exams may not yet have been covered.

Ms. Pecor noted that all students in online credit recovery courses have failed the course at least once in a traditional classroom setting. She explained that some students were enrolled in online credit recovery courses leading to the Regents exam, while others were enrolled solely for recovering credits needed toward graduation. Ms. Pecor reported that 93 students in online credit recovery courses were confirmed to have graduated in January 2016, and 20% of students attained one credit during the first semester of online credit recovery. She stated that some students were able to complete a one-year course in one semester.

Ms. Pecor stated that students in online credit recovery courses have earned 101 credits from the beginning of the 2015-16 school year through February 9, 2016, and all have passed their online courses. She noted that online credit recovery courses are highly individualized, with teachers providing instruction according to the specific skill gap of the student.

Ms. Pecor reported that it is anticipated that students in online credit recovery courses will attain another 150 credits by June 2016. She pointed out that this is a conservative estimate because most students are at least 40% of the way through the course, and research has shown that 40% completion is predictive of full course completion and passing the course. Ms. Pecor added that students who are close to completing one online course are likely to be successful in completing a second course before the end of the school year.

Ms. Pecor noted that students in online credit recovery courses are expected to earn a total of 450-500 credits between September 2015 and August 2016.

Ms. Bovard pointed out that the District's 4-year graduation rate was 51% and the 5-year rate was 58% for the 2011 cohort. She emphasized the importance of online credit recovery in aiding students to graduate within five years, particularly those who are over-age and have an insufficient number of credits.

VI. Review and Discuss Resolutions in Preparation for February 25, 2016 Board Business Meeting

- 1. Proposed Contract for an Independent Evaluator to Examine 2015-16 Performance of East High School – Resolution No. 2015-16: 529 - **Withdrawn****
- 2. Proposed Contract for an Independent Evaluator to Examine 2015-16 Performance of RCSD “Persistently Struggling” Schools (School No. 9, Charlotte High School, and Monroe High School) – Resolution No. 2015-16: 564**

Ms. Alberti explained that the NYS Education laws enacted last spring require “persistently struggling” schools to be examined by an independent evaluator to determine the extent to which each grant has been implemented, and the impact on school and student performance. She stated that this is the rationale for the above resolution (Resolution No. 2015-16: 564) for a contract with an independent evaluator.

Ms. Alberti reported that five applications were received and vendor presentations have just concluded. She stated that the decision to select a particular vendor(s) must be done by Monday, February 22nd. Ms. Alberti noted that a maximum of three teams of independent evaluators may be selected by the District to examine RCSD “persistently struggling” schools. She added that the contract would be in effect until June 30, 2016, so the evaluations will have to be performed by that deadline. Ms. Alberti emphasized the importance of the independent evaluator’s assessment being as useful as possible to the school in terms of identifying specific actions that will lead to improved performance.

Commissioner Evans sought clarification about a complete resolution being ready to present to the full Board of Education for the February 25th Business meeting. Ms. Alberti confirmed that the resolution will be completed in time for Commissioners’ review prior to the February 25th meeting.

Commissioner Evans recommended that the Administration prepare a brief memo to explain the rationale for selecting a particular vendor(s), so that this information can be provided to Board members with the complete resolution.

Commissioner Adams inquired about funding the expenses under the contract with the independent evaluator(s). Ms. Alberti replied that one of the conditions under the NYS grant for “persistently struggling” schools is that the District reserve 5% of these funds to cover the cost of an independent evaluator(s).

Motion by Commissioner Hallmark to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner White. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:58PM.