

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting
January 21, 2016

Attending: Malik Evans (Chair); Commissioners Hallmark (left at 6:27PM to conduct Board Governance Committee meeting, and returned at 7:03PM) and Elliott.

Parent Representative: Toyin Anderson

District Staff: Linda Cimusz, Interim Superintendent; Dr. Christiana Otuwa, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching & Learning; Michele Alberti, Executive Director of the Office of School Innovation; Keith Babuszcak, Chief of School Innovation for Career Pathways and Integrated Learning; Andy MacGowan, Project Administrator; Ruth Turner, Director of School Counseling & Social Work; Elizabeth Hanan, Director of Art Education; Kelly Bauman, Director of the Office of Expanded Learning.

Board Staff: Debra Flanagan

Commissioner Evans called the meeting to order at 5:33PM.

I. Review Minutes of December 8, 2015 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Elliott to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2015 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Hallmark. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

II. Cost/Benefit Analysis for Implementation of Arts Integration in RCSD Elementary Schools

Andy MacGowan and Elizabeth Hanan presented an analysis of the estimated costs for implementing arts integration district-wide in elementary schools. Mr. MacGowan reported that the data from the Rochester Arts Impact Studies and from a number of national research studies indicate that integrating the arts into the core curriculum will improve student achievement. He noted that the results from the final Arts Integration Study will be presented in the February Excellence in Student Achievement meeting.

Mr. MacGowan cautioned that the information regarding implementation costs is a rough estimate because no district has actually carried out a full-scale arts integration in the curriculum. Noting that costs for piloting this study amounted to \$270K and the study included approximately ¼ of RCSD elementary students, Mr. MacGowan projected that full-scale implementation would cost approximately \$1.1-1.4M. He stated that this amounts to an estimated \$81 per pupil with district-wide implementation, compared to \$71 per pupil under the pilot project.

Mr. MacGowan explained that the estimated costs include building internal capacity to support

arts integration through professional development, and student field trips to arts and cultural events in the community. He reported that the following costs would be expected to increase with district-wide implementation: staffing for Teaching Artists and clerical support; an increase in hours for a Project Coordinator from part-time to full-time; and for copying and art supplies. Mr. MacGowan noted that other costs would be expected to decline after completion of the pilot project: for staff to travel and attend conferences, and for an external evaluator to examine project data. He stated that the net cost from full-scale implementation would increase due to the need to retain 28-30 Teaching Artists, which would also take time because of a shortage in this field. For this reason, Mr. MacGowan recommended that implementation be conducted in stages over time.

Commissioner Evans asked about the potential for obtaining other grant funding to support district-wide arts integration. Mr. MacGowan replied that the U.S. Department of Education would not fund this initiative beyond the pilot project stage, but there may be other sources. He suggested monitoring the Requests for Proposal (RFPs) that are issued, and pointed out that the findings from the pilot project would support the District's request for grant funding.

Commissioner Evans noted that the use of an independent evaluator lends credibility to the pilot project findings and verifies the effectiveness of arts integration in the Rochester City School District.

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 per classroom over the course of the school year.

Commissioner Hallmark requested information about the professional development provided to classroom teachers in the project. Mr. MacGowan responded that he will provide this information to the Committee members.

Action Item: Mr. MacGowan will provide information to the members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee regarding the professional development provided to classroom teachers in the Arts Integration project, including the frequency and duration of this training.

Commissioner Elliott asked about the forms of art that were included in the pilot project. Mr. MacGowan explained that the project included visual arts, music and theater.

Commissioner Elliott noted the importance of dance as a form of art in many cultures, and encouraged District staff to consider including dance in implementing arts integration into the curriculum – particularly for high school students. Mr. MacGowan responded that implementation of arts integration was only being considered at the elementary level, and pointed out that the study indicated that different forms of art were found effective in engaging students at different developmental levels. He reported that kindergarten students tended to respond most to music, and 6th grade students tended to respond most to theater and drama. Mr. MacGowan suggested that a follow-up study to identify the specific factors leading to students' positive engagement with a particular art form at different developmental stages would be most useful.

Commissioner Elliott recommended that the District take advantage of local arts and cultural resources to expand opportunities for students and encourage involvement of community organizations, such as the Garth Fagan Dance Company.

III. Comprehensive Alignment of the Teaching & Learning Division to Support Students

Dr. Otuwa presented an overview of the many and varied functions of the Teaching & Learning Division, and the ways in which each of these functions supports students.

Highlights:

Early Childhood Education:

- Increase of 26% more four-year-old students being ready for kindergarten in 2014-15 than in 2013-14
- Successful implementation of full-day PreK program for four-year-old children in 2014-15
- Award of \$11.9M to fund full-day PreK for over 1,000 high-need three-year-old children
- Successful launch of PreK for three-year-old children this month
- Strong family and community support for the RCSD PreK program

Literacy and ELA:

- Percentage of students passing Common Core ELA Regents exam increased from 32% in June 2014 to 54% in June 2015
- 6.5% of students assigned to Reading Teachers demonstrated higher rates of growth than expected on NWEA assessments than students who were not assigned to a Reading Teacher.
- Expansion of online professional learning opportunities and elearning
- Increased integration between the ELA and ESOL curricula and professional development
- Summer programs to orient young children to PreK program, and to prepare students for entry into kindergarten
- Summer Reading initiatives and book giveaways for students

English-Language Learners & Languages Other Than English:

- An increase in the percentage of students demonstrating growth in English-language acquisition, based on the results of the NYS assessment – despite changes in this exam over the last two years.
- Online professional development scaffolding Common Core modules and units – available to all teachers
- Summer Language Academy for middle-school-aged ELL students, using an Expeditionary Learning approach

- Partnerships established with local universities to create a pipeline for teachers in high shortage areas (e.g. ESOL)

Health & Physical Education:

- Continued support and promotion of sports and athletics in schools
- Continued collaboration with other departments and school administrators to promote health and physical education
- Completed the District's physical education curriculum
- Collaborated with SUNY Brockport in designing a physical education assessment for elementary students
- Collaborated with the Information Management & Technology Department to review and modify online credit recovery for physical education

Commissioner Hallmark questioned the methods for providing physical education through an online course. Ms. Bovard commented that it is a quite innovative approach, and she offered to provide additional information.

Action Item: Ms. Bovard will provide information to the members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee about the physical education credit recovery course offered online.

Library Services:

- Librarians provide resources and materials to support classroom instruction, and teach students methods for accessing information
- District libraries are used by over 30,000 students and staff members and librarians manage over 1.8M items in library collections

Math:

- The percentage of RCSD students passing the Common Core Math Regents exam increased from 21% in June 2014 to 27% in June 2015
- Small increase (3%) in percentage of students in grades 3-8 passing NYS Math Assessments over the last two years
- Greater flexibility offered to students for math courses and credits: course blending algebra and geometry; statistics; financial algebra

Commissioner Elliott inquired whether the Regents exams are administered to students over the summer, and whether data is available from the exam results for the summer of 2015. Dr. Otuwa replied that she will provide this data.

Action Item: Dr. Otuwa will provide data regarding the results of the Regents exams administered in the summer of 2015 to the members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee.

Pupil Personnel Services:

- Restorative practices have been implemented in 14 RCSD schools, with training for all school staff
- Help Zones/Alternatives to Suspension have been created in each K-8 school
- Professional development and learning communities have been established to address meeting students' social and emotional needs
- The District-Wide Crisis Team has improved structure and organization

Science:

- Increase in the number of students taking the "Living Environment" exam
- Consistency in NYS Education Department Science testing materials throughout the District
- Professional development, including lessons for the NYS Science exam for 4th- and 8th-grade students
- Science kits and materials provided to schools

Social Studies:

- Variety of online professional learning opportunities for teachers
- Increased integration of writing skills in the Social Studies curriculum

Visual & Performing Arts:

- District-Wide Marching Band and Show Choir – Show Choir won first place at the Darien Lake Music Festival
- Three new or expanded string programs, reflecting an overall increase in instrumental music education in the District
- Art Showcase with artwork from approximately 2,000 students
- Partnership with the Rochester Education Foundation to provide scholarships for 40 students to attend summer music programs
- Continued partnerships with many arts and cultural organizations in the community, such as the Eastman School of Music, Hochstein School of Music & Dance, Rochester Museum & Science Center, Memorial Art Gallery, GEVA Theater, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Baobab Cultural Center, etc.

School Chiefs:

- Weekly meetings among School Chiefs and with Chiefs in the Teaching & Learning Division
- Weekly visits to schools for monitoring, oversight, and support: reports and feedback
- Regular meetings with school principals

Positive School Climate:

- Created Student Behavior Resource Manual for use in schools to assist staff in understanding the variety of effective responses to different student behaviors and to recognize factors underlying behaviors
- Clarification of behavior manifestation determinations for students with disabilities
- Review of draft revision to the Code of Conduct

Dr. Otuwa briefly reviewed monthly student suspension data for September through December for 2013-15, noting that there has been a substantial reduction in the number of suspensions over the last two years.

Commissioner Hallmark inquired about the breakdown of the student suspension data, and the extent to which suspensions can be attributed to a relatively small number of students who have been suspended multiple times. Dr. Otuwa replied that this accounts for the trends in student suspension data, but offered to provide greater detail in her next presentation regarding developing a comprehensive plan for social and emotional supports for students.

Curriculum Council:

- Redesign curriculum to better meet students' needs
- Exercise oversight regarding implementation of curriculum and Board policies
- Ensure participation by stakeholders (students, parents, and teachers) regarding the curriculum and instruction
- Continual evaluation and review of the curriculum and instruction

Commissioner Elliott asked about student representation on the Curriculum Council. Dr. Otuwa responded that a parent and a student have been selected to serve on the Curriculum Council.

Commissioner Elliott recommended that the Curriculum Council collaborate with the district-wide Student Leadership Congress to participate in the design/modification of the curriculum to ensure its relevance to students. She emphasized that student engagement is a critical factor in the success of the District's academic program, and their input is essential in designing an effective curriculum.

Addressing the Needs of All Students:

Dr. Otuwa observed that there is currently considerable overlap among the District's alternative programs, such as All City High School, LyncX, and NorthSTAR. She reported that redesign of programs at East High School based on the Big Picture model has begun to show signs of success. Dr. Otuwa explained that the Big Picture model is student-centered, provides internship opportunities, a student advisor and a mentor.

- Attendance data reveal that chronic absenteeism is a fundamental problem with all of the District's alternative programs, with between 70-85% of students missing more than 20% of school days

- The District has contracted with the Big Picture Program and the Falk Program to inform curriculum redesign, specifically for students who have been chronically absent and/or unsuccessful in traditional school settings or RCSD alternative programs
- Address barriers to attendance
- Expand work-based learning opportunities
- Data regarding the Big Picture Program (1999-2009):
 - » 95% of program graduates have been accepted to college
 - » 78% of program graduates enroll in college
 - » 66% have graduated from college or still attending

Special Education:

- A subgroup has been formed to examine the redesign of Special Education programs and to provide recommendations for creating a continuum of services
- Redesign of Special Education will be done in collaboration with stakeholders
- Approximately 50% of the students attending the NorthSTAR program have been recommended for therapeutic day programs, and the District is currently looking into programs approved by the NYS Education Department

Commissioner Evans emphasized the need for principals and teachers to use all of the resources available through the Data Warehouse to monitor school and student performance and address specific areas in need of improvement.

Commissioner Evans concurred with the need to continue focusing on Special Education to improve the District's ability to meet the needs of students with disabilities. He stated that the redesign of Special Education should include examination of the report commissioned approximately seven years ago from the Council of Great City Schools, which provided useful recommendations.

Commissioner Evans noted that conceptual models and plans are necessary, but their effectiveness depends on implementation by school staff. He inquired about the process for ensuring that the most suitable staff members are selected for alternative programs, which present additional challenges for educators. Dr. Otuwa responded that screening of candidates for administrator and teaching positions is critical, as well as communicating expectations and the challenges that can be anticipated in working with the students served in these programs.

Commissioner Elliott pointed out that staff recruitment cannot only consist of examining certification and academic credentials, but must also include consideration of urban experience and working with children who face unique challenges and whose background may be quite different from that of the staff. She asked about the lessons that Dr. Otuwa has learned during her tenure as Deputy Superintendent of Teaching & Learning. Dr. Otuwa replied that the ability to reach students and educate them effectively depends on having systems and structures in place and an environment that is conducive to learning and responsive to students' needs.

Parent Representative Toyin Anderson asked about the District's efforts to tap into the knowledge and expertise of other local school districts that have been successful in graduating

students with disabilities. Dr. Otuwa replied that her discussions with administrators in other local districts have indicated that the culture, expectations, and focus on teaching and learning are the key factors affecting the academic success of students with disabilities.

IV. Development of a Comprehensive Social and Emotional Plan

Dr. Otuwa and Ruth Turner discussed development of a multi-tiered system of social and emotional supports and interventions to meet students' needs. Universal supports would be offered to all students and would include improving school climate, school-wide positive behavioral support systems, fostering relationships between teachers and students, and social and emotional skill development. Tier 2 supports would include restorative practices, Response to Intervention, mentoring, Help Zones and Alternatives to Suspension programs, and Student Support Centers. Tier 3 would include more intensive services and interventions such as counseling, mobile crisis teams, referral for mental health counseling and other community-based services.

Ms. Turner noted that the allocation of resources in the District has been focused on the most intensive interventions (Tier 3), rather than providing the universal supports needed by all students. She also emphasized the importance of school staff learning to look beyond outward student behavior to identify underlying factors to be able to respond effectively.

Commissioner Elliott inquired as to how this model will be implemented. Dr. Otuwa explained that school principals are essential to implementation, and will be given professional development in social and emotional learning.

Commissioner Elliott asked about the potential for early identification of students' social and emotional needs to prevent loss of instructional time. Ms. Turner replied that the District's approach has been to suspend students for behavioral problems, which has led to a great deal of lost instructional time. She stated that this will be less of an issue with a staff member working with the student and family to discuss their needs, offer support and early intervention. Ms. Turner asserted that the cycle of student suspension for behavioral problems and loss of instructional time will stop when staff learn to address underlying factors and needs.

Ms. Turner reported that a comprehensive social and emotional learning curriculum will be developed and integrated into the core curriculum content. She also acknowledged the importance of social and emotional learning for staff members through professional development.

Ms. Turner discussed the essential components of social and emotional learning:

- Self awareness
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Self-management and self-control
- Responsible decision-making

Ms. Turner reported that studies of the impact of social and emotional learning (SEL) show that these skills enhance student achievement and reduce behavioral problems and distress. She stated that recent research has also demonstrated the importance of social and emotional learning for lifelong success in school and the workplace.

The district-wide model will consist of:

- Planned, systematic classroom-based SEL instruction and a supportive school climate
- After-school and community activities that are coordinated with SEL efforts
- School-Family-Community partnerships to enhance social, emotional, and academic competence
- Coordinated mental health and health services that reinforce SEL instruction

Ms. Turner stated that many local suburban school districts incorporate SEL into the academic curriculum on a daily basis, and this is an even greater need for RCSD students.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the anticipated cost for implementing the SEL model. Dr. Otuwa replied that work is still under way to anticipate student need and to estimate costs.

V. Discussion of the Roles and Responsibilities of Parent Liaisons and Home School Assistants

Adele Bovard provided Committee members with the current job descriptions for the positions of Parent Liaison and Home School Assistant. She pointed out that the District has considerable resources invested in terms of staffing for these two positions, and recommended that these positions be combined to provide consistency in roles and responsibilities.

Ms. Bovard presented a new position description for a Unified Parent Liaison, emphasizing the importance of identifying best practices and monitoring to ensure that the staff in this position are actually being deployed to meet the job requirements for serving as a liaison between home and school. She stated that the draft job description for the Unified Parent Liaison position was developed in collaboration with the Office of Parent Engagement and the Teaching & Learning Division. Ms. Bovard noted that focus groups will be formed and attorneys in the Law Department will be consulted about unifying these two positions.

Jerome Underwood emphasized the importance of the District adopting a consistent and unified approach in interacting and responding to parents. He observed that there is currently a great deal of variation in the way in which Parent Liaisons and Home School Assistants are utilized in schools.

Action Item: The Excellence in Student Achievement Committee will continue to examine the roles and responsibilities of Parent Liaisons and Home School Assistants, as well as the potential consolidation of these positions as further progress has been made.

VI. Review and Discuss Resolutions in Preparation for January 28, 2016 Board Business Meeting

1. Proposed Amendment to Contract with Center for Youth to Add Alternatives to Suspension at Edison High School – Resolution No. 2015-16: 507

Ms. Turner explained that the above resolution is to amend the contract with the Center for Youth to establish a Help Zone and retain a Youth Advocate at Edison High School.

Commissioner Elliott commented on Board members' visit to Edison High School in the fall, and pointed out that there is a great need for improvement in the school climate.

Motion by Commissioner Elliott to approve above resolution to amend the contract with the Center for Youth. Seconded by Commissioner Hallmark. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

2. Amendment to Hillside Work Scholarship Connection contract for three additional Youth Advocates at Edison High School – Resolution No. 2015-16: 509

Keith Babuszcak explained that the above resolution is to provide three additional Youth Advocates through the Hillside Work Scholarship Connection program at Edison High School, and this would be funded through grants. He added that one of the Youth Advocates would be assigned to the P-Tech program, which does not currently have staff in this position.

Motion by Commissioner Elliott to approve above resolution to provide three additional Youth Advocates through the Hillside Work Scholarship Connection program. Seconded by Commissioner Hallmark. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

3. Proposed Contract with *The Big Picture Company* to provide professional development on structures, practices and curriculum proven effective in engaging students, assist in creating school, program and curriculum design, assist in planning and implementing effective home visit and family engagement protocols, and provide training and support services for school advisors and staff, with the goal to improve programming and outcomes for students in alternative education settings – Resolution No. 2015-16: 505

Dr. Otuwa explained that the above resolution for a contract with *The Big Picture Company* is to assist the District with redesign of alternative programs and curriculum, as well as to provide professional development as part of implementation of the redesign.

Commissioner Evans observed that *The Big Picture Company* has already evaluated RCSD alternative programs and presented recommendations for the redesign.

Motion by Commissioner Elliott to approve above resolution to contract with *The Big Picture Company*. Seconded by Commissioner Hallmark. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

VII. Preview of Summer Learning Video to be released by the District

Kelly Bauman presented a video to be released by the District regarding the RCSD summer program and the importance of preventing students' learning loss over the summer.

Committee members expressed appreciation for the way in which this message was conveyed in the video.

Commissioner Evans recommended posting the video on the District website.

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:19PM.