

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting
December 8, 2015

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

Parent Representative: Toyin Anderson

District Staff: Dr. Christiana Otuwa, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching & Learning; Katie Yarlett, Executive Director of Reading by the 3rd Grade; Barbara Goldammer, Director of Student Placement; Chris La Morte, Director of Testing; Chris Suriano, Executive Director of Special Education and Related Services.

Board Staff: Debra Flanagan

Commissioner Evans called the meeting to order at 7:40PM.

I. Review Minutes of November 10, 2015 Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting of the Whole

Motion by Commissioner Elliott to approve the November 10, 2015 minutes of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting of the Whole. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

II. Presentation regarding Implementation of EngageNY Curriculum to Encourage Reading on Grade Level by Third Grade

Katie Yarlett presented information regarding the implications of students reading on grade level by 3rd grade, and the efforts being made in the District to implement the EngageNY curriculum to improve students' reading abilities. Below are the highlights of her presentation:

- Students reading below grade level by third grade are 4 times more likely to fail to graduate from high school.
- High poverty students are 13 times less likely to graduate from high school if they are not reading on grade level by third grade.
- Currently, only 7% of RCSD third-grade students are reading at least at grade level.
- Improving early literacy is the single most impactful way to increase high school graduation rates in the District.

Ms. Yarlett explained that children from impoverished households are exposed to 30 million fewer words by age three than those from more affluent and educated families. She expressed the hope that providing PreK to three- and four-year-old children and early literacy initiatives will begin to close the achievement gap for RCSD students.

Commissioner Elliott inquired whether music is included in the study of children's exposure to language, noting that African American children may be more likely to be exposed to language through music than other groups of children. Ms. Yarlett replied that music, lyrics and poetry were included in this study, although she did not have information of the specific sources of language exposure for each group of children.

Ms. Yarlett noted that the EngageNY curriculum was adopted four years ago, but the District has made enhancements, such as scaffolding for ELL students, and creating additional resources and student engagement activities. She reported that schools in the District are expected to implement the EngageNY curriculum to enhance children's literacy at early ages, although there is a great deal of variation in the extent to which this curriculum is being implemented.

Commissioner Adams questioned whether Expeditionary Learning schools are using the EngageNY curriculum. Ms. Yarlett replied that these schools (#8, 10, and 58) have their own curricula that is not linked to the EngageNY curriculum, but is aligned to Common Core standards. She explained that backwards mapping is used to ensure teaching to the standards.

Ms. Yarlett discussed a variety of approaches within the District to implementing the EngageNY curriculum, with some teachers using Common Core standards to drive their instruction and other teachers implementing the curriculum by using it as a script. She reported working with coaches to assist teachers with implementation and attending grade-level meetings to discuss differentiation of instruction based on the standards. Ms. Yarlett pointed out that backwards mapping has been critical to transitioning from using the curriculum verbatim to actually informing instruction.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about schools that have not yet implemented the EngageNY curriculum. Ms. Yarlett responded that this is not an issue involving a school, but of individual teachers who are not using the curriculum. She added that RCSD adopted this curriculum to ensure consistency of instruction throughout schools, particularly in light of the high rate of mobility of many families in the District.

Commissioner Elliott asked about the rationale for not implementing the adopted curriculum, and the way in which these teachers would be approached. Ms. Yarlett replied that these teachers typically explain that they are teaching to the Common Core standards, even if not using the District's adopted curriculum. Dr. Otuwa stated that the school principal should work with these teachers, offering support and guidance with implementation.

Ms. Yarlett explained that the EngageNY curriculum regarding early literacy is divided into two main sections: Listening and Learning, and Skill Development. Exposure to oral language and listening are critical for young children whose reading skills are not yet developed. Ms. Yarlett pointed out that the material read aloud to young children includes texts of historic and scientific significance, so that children are gaining knowledge in these academic content areas while developing their linguistic skills.

Ms. Yarlett described the Skills strand of the curriculum, which involves teaching children the mechanics of reading and writing, encoding and decoding language, and explicit instruction in phonics.

Ms. Yarlett discussed changes to the EngageNY curriculum as a result of a review conducted by the NYS Ad Hoc Committee on Implementation of the Common Core Standards. The Ad Hoc Committee found that the Listening and Learning portion of the Core Curriculum was lacking in cultural relevance and presented stereotypical and inaccurate portrayals of racial and ethnic minority groups. She reported that the Teaching & Learning Division began work in the summer of 2015 to develop a culturally responsive and integrated language arts curriculum. Ms. Yarlett stated that the more culturally relevant aspects of the curriculum will be piloted in the spring of 2016, with implementation district-wide in the 2016-17 school year.

Dr. Otuwa added that the District responded to the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee by creating a Curriculum Council, which began by examining the curriculum content and materials for grades K-2. She emphasized the importance of reaching children in these early years, when they are learning about themselves, their environment, and other people. She noted that the District has engaged the Rochester Teacher Center and Dr. Schwartz to develop the full comprehensive, culturally relevant K-2 curriculum for implementation in 2017-18. Dr. Otuwa discussed plans to conduct an analysis to identify the key elements of a curriculum that is culturally responsive for RCSD students. She stated that in-house development of this curriculum with teachers will create greater ownership and motivation for implementation. Dr. Otuwa pointed out that RCSD teachers were not involved in creating the EngageNY curriculum and have had difficulties with implementation, as well as a lack of resources and support.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the K-2 curriculum prior to developing this new model. Dr. Otuwa replied that few resources were allocated for curriculum development or writing, and there was no comprehensive structure to the curriculum. She stated that the Curriculum Council is now creating this structure, with the intent of re-evaluating the curriculum every five years.

Action Item: Dr. Otuwa will present the comprehensive K-2 curriculum structure to the members of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee in an upcoming meeting.

Dr. Otuwa noted that the first African-African American studies curriculum was developed over this last summer, and is now being used in District high schools. She emphasized the importance of ensuring cultural and emotional relevance of the curriculum for RCSD students.

Commissioner Evans pointed out that the curriculum still has to be delivered in a way that engages students, and asked about efforts to address student engagement. Dr. Otuwa observed that the majority of teachers want students to be engaged, but teachers have not been provided adequate or appropriate resources in the past to implement the curriculum. She discussed the importance of assisting and supporting teachers, and of providing opportunities for teachers to meet to share information and exchange ideas to enhance instructional practices. Dr. Otuwa stated that the EngageNY curriculum is actually quite sketchy, which is the reason that additional work had to be done within the District.

Commissioner Evans asserted that the District is not required to adopt the EngageNY curriculum. Dr. Otuwa concurred, noting that the District chose to adopt this curriculum several years ago.

Commissioner Adams pointed out that the District chose to adopt the EngageNY curriculum after the State adopted Common Core standards. She recalled urging her colleagues to compare the existing Rochester curriculum with Common Core standards to identify modifications needed, rather than abandoning this curriculum altogether. She stated that her intent was to honor the effort and local expertise that had gone into creating the Rochester curriculum, but the EngageNY model was adopted anyway.

Commissioner White emphasized that this is another example of the District continually changing approaches, leading to a waste of effort and resources and ultimately undermining the efforts of students and staff.

Commissioner Adams commended current efforts to repair and enhance the EngageNY curriculum, and expressed the hope that these modifications will be sustained and prove beneficial to students.

Commissioner Adams inquired about the possibility of adding culturally relevant teaching practices to the Innovation Greenhouse over the summer. Dr. Otuwa responded that this will definitely be considered, now that summer school is operated under the purview of the Teaching & Learning Division.

Commissioner Evans asked about the department that has managed summer school in the past. Dr. Otuwa replied that summer school has been under the Chief of Staff until this year.

Ms. Yarlett reported that schools that have fully implemented the Skills strand of the Core Knowledge Language Arts curriculum have witnessed considerable growth in their students' academic performance and readiness to advance to the next grade level. As an example, she cited School No. 22 in which 22% of 2nd grade students were considered ready for 2nd grade at the beginning of the school year in 2014. By September 2015, 49% of the students entering 2nd grade at School No. 22 were considered ready for this grade level.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the changes at School No. 22 that have led to significant gains in students' reading abilities. Ms. Yarlett stated that she and a coach at the school have trained teachers how to implement the Skills strand and to use assessments to drive differentiated instruction. She pointed out that School No. 22 has a Reading Teacher who is also a Teacher Mentor, an RTI instructor, and an in-house coach that have worked as a team to collaborate effectively with teachers to show them how to use data to inform their instruction. Ms. Yarlett reported that students in this school are placed in homogeneous groups according to their skill needs, and constantly move between groups as their needs change. She noted that students' placement and skill level is evaluated every three to four weeks.

Ms. Yarlett reported that as more teachers implement the Skills strand of the curriculum (i.e. phonics), there is a corresponding increase in the percentage of students ready to perform on grade level at the beginning of the school year. She cited an increase in the percentage of RCSD 2nd grade students meeting or exceeding national NWEA growth standards as implementation proceeds: from 21% last year to 29% this year.

Commissioner Elliott suggested having staff from School No. 22 give a presentation in an upcoming Board meeting.

Ms. Yarlett noted that the significant increase in the number of Reading Teachers in the District has also contributed to an increasing number of students exceeding expected growth in NWEA assessment scores. She stated that 6.5% more students exceeded NWEA growth expectations when assigned to a Reading Teacher.

Ms. Yarlett described focusing on instructional practices in professional development through the use of online videos and collegial circles, which has been valuable in demonstrating effective and culturally responsive teaching.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the ideal number of Reading Teachers per school. Ms. Yarlett responded that this depends on the size of the school, but ideally there should be one Reading Teacher for every ten classrooms. She also discussed the need for Reading Teachers for students in grades 6-8, noting that the District currently only has two Reading Teachers for students in these grade levels.

Commissioner Elliott announced that she would like to raise this issue in the context of upcoming RCSD budget deliberations because Reading Teachers and early literacy is so fundamental to learning.

Ms. Yarlett concluded by reporting additional efforts being made in the District to encourage reading on grade level by 3rd grade, including the enhanced integrated K-2 ELA curriculum, assignment of at least one Reading Teacher to each elementary school, improved differentiation of curriculum and instruction, full-day PreK programs for three- and four-year-old children, and summer programming. She described a five-week program (PreK go K) to introduce children to the kindergarten environment and expectations. Ms. Yarlett noted that data is currently being analyzed to identify outcomes from the PreK go K program.

Commissioner Elliott expressed concern about a significant number of students falling behind in 4th grade, and asked about efforts to address this concern. Ms. Yarlett responded that earlier and greater exposure of young children to language is intended to mitigate these problems, enabling children to process and utilize language for learning earlier in their education.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about efforts to communicate to parents the vital importance of language exposure early in a child's life. Ms. Yarlett replied that a City-wide reading conference was recently conducted for District families, and the Ramp Up to PreK program enables families to get to know school staff and prepare children three weeks prior to the official start of the school year. She discussed the critical transitions from 2nd to 3rd grade to become fluent in reading, and from 3rd to 4th grade to apply these skills in reading to learn.

Commissioner White recalled that the renewed emphasis on reading in the District arose during Commissioner Evans' tenure as Board President. He stated that the District only had one Reading Teacher at that time, and the Board insisted on increasing the number of these teachers and making early literacy a priority. Commissioner White credited Superintendent Vargas with implementing this initiative beyond levels directed by the Board. He noted that the Board

remains committed to the emphasis on reading as a foundation for learning.

Commissioner Evans remarked that the focus on professional development is appreciated, particularly in implementing quality instructional practices. He inquired about continuing education requirements for teachers. Ms. Yarlett replied that professional development and continuing education are not mandatory, which is why online modules have been so effective. She noted that collective bargaining agreements offer incentives for professional development by paying teachers for up to 36 hours of training per year.

III. Presentation on Student Placement

Barbara Goldammer thanked Board members for referring parents with questions and concerns to the Student Placement Office, so that these concerns can be addressed.

Ms. Goldammer reviewed data for each RCSD school regarding the number and percentage of students in the neighborhood catchment area (i.e. residing within 0.5 miles of school) and in the same zone as the school. She noted that between 1-40% of RCSD students attend their neighborhood school, and between 22-86% of students in K-6 and K-8 schools attend a school within their zone.

Commissioner Elliott pointed out that the data reflect the impact of the District closing schools in inner city areas and moving students farther from their neighborhood. She asserted that sustaining schools in inner city areas would have led a greater number of students and families to remain in these communities, and would have instead resulted in shutting down schools in outlying areas. Commissioner Elliott discussed the disruption that this has caused to neighborhoods, while requiring students to attend schools in areas with which they are not familiar and compelling parents to travel greater distances to attend meetings and participate in their child's school.

Ms. Goldammer discussed efforts to minimize disruption in students' education, by not requiring them to transfer schools when their family moves to a different zone. She explained that the family may later contact the Student Placement Office to enroll a younger sibling in school, and the family is encouraged to place the younger child in a school in their current zone. Ms. Goldammer stated that this is the point at which District staff also encourage the family to transfer the older child to a school in their current zone. She stated that families have often built relationships within the school and are reluctant to leave, but Placement Office staff try to work with them.

Commissioner Evans observed that some families will deliberately choose a school farther away from their residence to ensure that transportation services are provided for their child. He recalled that a committee was formed several years ago to examine transportation patterns and recommend options for reducing District transportation costs. Commissioner Evans stated that one of the recommendations was to strengthen the zone boundaries to reduce the number of buses needed. He noted that an analysis found the potential for significant savings from strengthening the zone boundaries, while providing transportation to a greater number of students.

Commissioner Evans inquired about concerns raised by parents of students attending School No. 22, in light of their move to the Franklin Campus. He expressed concern about elementary students and high school students attending school in the same building. Ms. Goldammer replied that she has not heard any complaints about this situation.

Ms. Goldammer reported that the entering RCSD kindergarten class in September 2015 is smaller than in previous years, and stated that it is not yet known whether this reflects changes in local demographics, other trends, or the effect of charter schools. She noted that three new charter schools with a focus on grades K-2 have applied to open in the District, and approval of these charter schools would affect the number of incoming RCSD kindergarten students in the future.

Ms. Goldammer observed that fewer 7th and 9th grade students participated in the school choice process this year. She stated that many 7th grade students have elected to remain in a K-8 school, rather than transfer to a different school in 7th grade. Ms. Goldammer reported that the percentage of 9th grade students participating in the school choice process has declined due to the increase in 7-12 schools in the District. She discussed collaborating with the Communications Department and the Parent Advisory Council to ensure that information regarding the student placement process is clear and comprehensible to families.

Commissioner Adams asked about providing assistance to students whose parents do not participate in the school choice process because of the potential disadvantage to the student. She inquired about the possibility of establishing an advocacy process for these students, examining paperwork deadlines, and involving students in higher grade levels (i.e. 9th grade) in making their own school choices.

Commissioner Elliott questioned the District's capacity to provide everyone their school of choice. Ms. Goldammer replied that increased participation in the school choice process would reduce the percentage of students placed in a school of their top three choices. She reported that approximately half of RCSD students participate in the school choice process currently and about 95% are placed in one of their top three choices of schools.

Ms. Goldammer discussed efforts to collaborate with PreK programs and community-based providers to reach out to families to encourage participation in the school choice process. She reported that counselors in middle schools and high schools are also working with students on school choice. She described an initiative to have videos online and in the Student Placement Office to provide information about RCSD schools and programs to encourage school choice and ensure consistency in communications about the placement process. Ms. Goldammer also noted that forms will be posted online for families to complete before coming to the Placement Office, which will expedite the process.

Ms. Goldammer discussed a number of challenges encountered this year:

- The Committee on Special Education identified 210 RCSD students as needing new placements in July 2015, although placements and staffing for students with disabilities had already been determined in May and June 2015.

The change in placements was partially due to the shift from the Integrated Co-Teaching model (ICOT) to the Consultant Teacher model in Special Education. In other cases, placements were needed for students coming from charter schools or outside of the District.

- The NYS Education Department clarified in August 2015 that East High School does not have a full continuum of Special Education classes, so these students had to return to the District and placements had to be found for them in late summer.
- An additional 241 students with disabilities enrolled in the District over the summer

Ms. Goldammer reported that she and the Executive Director of Special Education, Chris Suriano, worked throughout the summer to identify locations for Special Education classrooms, staffing needs, and communications with parents.

Commissioner White commented on numerous complaints received about inappropriate classroom placements for students with disabilities, and he asked about the reason for these problems at the beginning of this school year. He pointed out that this is the second consecutive year that the District has had issues surrounding Special Education. Commissioner White recalled that student enrollment and staffing projections were inaccurate last year, leading to substantial cost increases that had not been included in the adopted budget. He emphasized that these problems cannot continue, and referred to a potential lawsuit against the District regarding Special Education.

Dr. Otuwa described extensive meetings and efforts to provide information to representatives from the Empire Justice Center regarding the District's Special Education program. She reported that these efforts were becoming so time-consuming that she requested additional time to continue implementing the redesign of Special Education in the District before participating in any more meetings. Dr. Otuwa stated that the representatives from Empire Justice Center withdrew at that point, later asking that a Special Education czar be appointed in the District.

Dr. Otuwa and Chris Suriano described current efforts to improve the Special Education program, including developing effective models in collaboration with teachers and visiting model schools. Mr. Suriano discussed a recent visit to the Stanley G. Falk School in the Buffalo School District. Dr. Otuwa stated that a subgroup has been formed to identify effective practices for Special Education teachers to improve the educational attainment of students with disabilities.

Commissioner Elliott questioned the need to visit model schools outside of the area, particularly since she and Board President White visited Hope Hall in Rochester and provided information to the Administration about this highly effective school. She pointed out that this was simply dismissed and given no further consideration, despite the fact that Hope Hall has a long history of working effectively with students with disabilities and has maintained a high graduation rate. Commissioner Elliott contended that there is no need to spend time visiting schools out of the Rochester area when there are highly successful schools here in the community. Mr. Suriano replied that Hope Hall is not certified by New York State, but their approach is used by the

Stanley G. Falk School in Buffalo and the District is exploring these models.

Commissioner Elliott responded that regardless of NYS certification, the Administration could at least take a look at local schools that have proven to be quite successful in educating students with disabilities and learn from their experience and expertise. She added that Sister Diana Dolce, administrator of Hope Hall, has also offered to provide assistance to the District regarding the Special Education program.

Commissioner White declared that the District's failure to consider or learn from effective models has led to the same problems persisting for years. He cited the example of the School Without Walls as a highly effective model that the Board has encouraged the Administration to replicate. Commissioner White stated that the Administration has responded that the State will not approve any additional consortium schools, but there is opportunity to expand the capacity of the existing School Without Walls. He objected to the tendency to dismiss or overlook opportunities that already exist in the District or in the Rochester community. Commissioner White noted that the recent visit to a school in Buffalo to see an effective model for Special Education is just the most recent example of this tendency, particularly since the Administration has already been told repeatedly of a successful model here in Rochester.

Mr. Suriano stated that he would welcome further discussion of the challenges in the Special Education program that occurred over the summer, and pointed out that all of the students were placed by the beginning of the school year. He reported that 19 new special classes were added, despite the brief timeframe available to accommodate students' needs. Mr. Suriano acknowledged that concerns were raised regarding three of the nineteen special classes, particularly because of the rooms that the schools chose in spite of the guidelines provided regarding the placement of these classes. He pointed out that additional detail is needed to further explicate the concerns regarding Special Education that occurred at the outset of this school year.

Mr. Suriano stated that he has collaborated with the Stanley G. Falk School in Buffalo since he began working with the Rochester City School District. He reported that this school is considering expanding to Rochester, which was another reason for his recent visit. Mr. Suriano noted that some of the practices used at Hope Hall have been incorporated into RCSD 8-1-2 programs and into the NorthSTAR program. He stated that he would welcome further in-depth conversation about initiatives in Special Education.

Commissioner Adams contended that there seem to be issues throughout the District with students with disabilities not receiving the services to meet their needs, as required in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). Mr. Suriano acknowledged that non-compliance with the provisions of the IEP could arise, particularly for services in which there is a shortage of providers (bilingual Special Education teachers, speech therapists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists). He stated that he follows up on every case in which a student has been identified as having a disability and does not have an IEP.

Commissioner Adams clarified that she is referring to situations in which the student has an IEP, but the services are not being provided. She asserted that students with disabilities cannot even transfer to a location to obtain services because this is a pervasive and systemic issue in

the District. Mr. Suriano replied that he is only aware of one building that is short of staffing in terms of implementing IEPs at this point.

Commissioner Adams also pointed out that there is also overcrowding in general education classrooms because of insufficient planning to accommodate mainstreaming of students with disabilities in these classrooms.

Commissioner Elliott requested a review of the student placement process that would be conducted with parents. Ms. Goldammer replied that parents first stop at the Information Desk in the Placement Office to pick up forms, and staff offer assistance in explaining and completing forms, and determine if there are special needs to be addressed (e.g. homelessness, ELL students, students with disabilities). She explained that the Placement Office initiates the process of referring student and family information for follow-up by the appropriate department. Ms. Goldammer stated that the family meets with a Placement Specialist to discuss school options, availability, and to make a final decision. For students in need of Special Education services, Placement Specialists review the IEP with the family. Ms. Goldammer reported that the Placement Office currently has three Placement Specialists, who collaborate with Registrars to identify available seats in schools.

Commissioner Elliott questioned whether three Placement Specialists are sufficient to handle the volume of families coming into the Placement Office. Ms. Goldammer replied that administrators and temporary staff are brought in to assist during busy times, such as over the summer.

Commissioner Elliott asked about the number of students placed per year. Ms. Goldammer responded that approximately 4,000 students are placed by the Placement Office each year.

Commissioner Elliott inquired about the percentage of students receiving their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice of schools. Ms. Goldammer replied that this data is recorded as part of the lottery process, but not for placements handled outside of this process. She added that these placements are determined by student need, location of services, and availability.

Commissioner Elliott questioned the rationale for concentrating certain types of high-need students in one school (e.g. ELL students in School No. 9), rather than promoting a more even distribution throughout the District. She stated that this presents a significant disadvantage in terms of the school's overall performance on standardized tests and graduation rates, which also affects their accountability status. Ms. Goldammer explained that some high-needs students, such as ELL students, are concentrated in particular schools because of the availability and access to needed resources. She added that the District is considering using the Rochester International Academy (RIA) model, in which students are actually enrolled in different schools but attend RIA to obtain needed resources and services. Ms. Goldammer pointed out that this arrangement would ensure that the performance of any one particular school will not be unduly affected. Dr. Otuwa added that the District hopes to utilize this model beginning in the 2016-17 school year.

In terms of ways in which Board members can support the efforts of the Placement Office, Ms. Goldammer presented the following recommendations:

- Informing parents and families of the Parent Preference/Managed Choice policy (5153) and placement process;
- Encouraging families to register early and to participate in the lottery;
- Attending the School Expo on January 9, 2016 and the PreK-K Fair on February 6, 2016;
- Continuing to bring placement concerns to the attention of the Placement Office; and
- Reviewing and considering revision of the Parent Preference/Managed Choice policy

Commissioner Elliott requested Ms. Goldammer's recommendations for revising the Parent Preference/Managed Choice policy. Ms. Goldammer replied that the Buffalo School District was recently cited for civil rights violations due to their school choice policy, which has since been revised. She stated that she would like to encourage the Board to explore the implications of the current policy (e.g. community schools, trends, and location) and to examine other models.

Commissioner Adams questioned the credentials, education, and expectations of staff in the Placement Office in terms of their ability to meet the needs of families. Ms. Goldammer responded that a great deal of effort has been expended on training and customer service to improve the skills of staff in the Placement Office. She stated that she is pleased with their work performance, although there is always room for improvement. Ms. Goldammer noted that the staff have worked well with families, noting that a small percentage of the 2400 families that came to the Placement Office over the summer had concerns that could not be addressed by staff and needed her attention. She stated that she is aware of concerns and that parents are sometimes dissatisfied with the available choices.

Commissioner Adams clarified that she is not referring to the work flow in the Placement Office, but of the clarity, relevance, and accuracy of information provided to families. Ms. Goldammer replied that scripts are being provided to school principals and online videos will be used to ensure greater consistency in the information communicated to families.

Parent Representative Toyin Anderson inquired about responsibility for making student enrollment projections and determining the type, amount and distribution of resources for meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

Commissioner Elliott asked about services provided to students with disabilities when a staff person is absent, and how the District ensures that these students' needs are met. Chris Suriano replied that a certified substitute teacher is obtained if the regular Special Education teacher is absent. He noted that coverage is problematic in obtaining related services because there is a shortage of speech therapists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists throughout the state.

IV. Review Resolution for an Agreement with Strategic Measurement and Evaluation, Inc. to Score NYS ELA and Math Assessments for Grades 3-8 (Resolution No. 2015-16: 426)

Steve LaMorte gave a presentation regarding scoring of NYS ELA and Math assessments for grades 3-8, and the qualifications of Strategic Measurement and Evaluation, Inc. to perform this work. He noted that up to 25,000 exams must be scored within a 2-3 week timeframe for submission to the state. Mr. LaMorte reported that Strategic Measurement and Evaluation, Inc. has over six years of experience in scoring these exams in some of the largest districts in the state. He noted that this vendor has been performing this work in the District for the last two years, and has rigorous standards for hiring and for protection of student data privacy. In addition, Mr. LaMorte pointed out that the cost for contracting with Strategic Measurement and Evaluation, Inc. would be approximately the same as having District teachers take the time to score the assessments. He stated that contracting for this work is an advantage in that teachers are able to remain in their classrooms with their students, instead of having substitutes cover their classrooms while they score exams.

Motion by Commissioner Elliott to approve the resolution for an agreement with Strategic Measurement and Evaluation, Inc. to score NYS ELA and Math assessments for grades 3-8. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of the Parent Representative.**

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:36PM.