

**ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Excellence in Student Achievement Committee**  
**November 7, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

Attendance: Commissioner Van White (Chair), Commissioner Willa Powell; District Staff: Marlene Blocker, Kathleen Denaro, Mary Doyle, David Grant, Susan Hasenauer-Curtis, Carol Jones, Kevin Kline, Beth Mascitti-Miller, Brenda Pacheco; Center for Governmental Research Staff: Kristen Pryor, Erika Rosenberg; Board Staff: Jacqueline Morgan

Absent: Commissioner Cynthia Elliott, Parent Representative Kimberly McKinsey-Mabry

Commissioner White called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

I. **Minutes**

**Motion** to approve the October minutes was made by Commissioner White; seconded by Commissioner Powell.

II. **Portfolio of Schools**

The Center for Governmental Research (CGR) was commissioned to prepare an evaluation of the District's new schools. The CGR evaluation focused on the Rochester Early College International High School, Integrated Arts and Technology High School, Robert Brown School of Construction and Design, Rochester STEM High School and Vanguard Collegiate High School. The existing high schools and K-8 schools were not addressed in this evaluation.

Staff from CGR shared their key findings with the committee, along with its methodology for the findings. CGR also shared test results of the students attending the new schools as compared with all RCSD students.

Commissioner White and Commissioner Powell both noted that the District is losing students to charter and private schools. Commissioner White also noted that the district's schools must be competitive; and that parents and students want good choices.

CGR staff provided a Power Point that outlined the purpose of the evaluation of the five new schools. It was noted that the purpose of the evaluation was for the following reasons:

- To be used as a tool for reflection for school and district leadership to assist with school improvement
- To spark questions and to encourage dialogue and problem-solving
- To share successes and challenges with larger community

Ms. Rosenberg noted that it was found that the schools had built solid foundations in their first year, and that there are areas where additional focus is needed in the second year. She also noted that some of the outcomes that were higher in the new schools when compared to the other schools in the district were GPA, attendance and the number of accumulated credits.

The picture was a little more mixed when State tests were compared to other schools in the district. There were 12 comparisons made; with six comparisons where the new schools were above the district level and six where the schools were at or below the district level.

Some of the common structures across new schools are:

- Longer class periods
- Accelerated learning
- Common planning time for all staff
- Increased use of technology in instruction
- Academic intervention

Staff at the new schools generally viewed district support as positive. Staff also expressed their concerns that the district will change/close the schools without giving it enough time and support to succeed.

The following suggestions for school-level improvement opportunities are as follows:

- Guard against allowing the positive feel of the schools to obscure the need to increase academic rigor
- Focus on student engagement
- Think of new ways to offer effective academic intervention
- Continue to work on establishing/enforcing standards for behavior

### III. **Creation of Performing Arts School**

The Administration presented an overview of the current School of the Arts (SOTA) which included attendance rates and graduation rates.

The overview also included what would be needed to create a second SOTA. These needs include the following:

- Available funding
- Staffing
- Facilities

Commissioner White began the discussion on the feasibility of creating another performing arts school by stating this this would be the first conversation around this issue. And, that the discussions should begin with the administration as they can help frame the conversation. This conversation will not end here, as this is a conversation that must include parents, students, teachers and the community.

Mary Doyle began the presentation by providing data from the existing School of the Arts (SOTA). She noted that students who attend SOTA have both an academic and art sequence; and that there are concentrations in Creative Writing, Dance, Drama, Music (instrumental or vocal), Theatre Technology, or Visual Arts. Ms. Doyle stated that students must audition go attend SOTA.

Ms. Doyle noted that the School of the Arts averages a 95% daily attendance rate, has the highest district graduation rate of 93%, is the highest requested school by students/parents at the 7<sup>th</sup> grade entry level for district, and that more than 90% of graduates go on to college. It was also noted that SOTA has different demographics than most high schools in the district.

Ms. Hasenauer-Curtis began the discussion on the needs for a second performing arts school by noting that because this would be a specialty school, funding would have to be available, as the arts are not funded by any department centrally except for staffing. She pointed out that staffing is the key to making the program work. Budget constraints cannot dictate staffing.

There must be appropriate facilities must be equipped to handle what is being offered, such as: multiple performance theaters, multiple technology labs linked to the composition of music, CAD (computer-aided design) for set design, costume design and technical design, workshops and design rooms, photography labs, 3D visual arts media labs, kilns and related materials. The physical setting would need to be

designed with all performing art components in mind. In addition to these needs, there is also a need for classrooms for academics and athletics rooms for conditioning.

Following the presentation several questions were asked by the committee in the form of action items that are listed below.

**Action Items:**

1. Mary Doyle to provide copy of CGR PPT.
2. Mary Doyle to provide data around schools that have low poverty rates; including graduation and attendance rates.
3. Brenda Pacheco to provide Trans A certification revisions.
4. Mary Doyle/Brenda Pacheco to provide entrance criteria for students auditioning to attend SOTA. Include demand for each area (i.e. dance, creative writing, performing arts, instrumental music, visual arts, etc.)
5. Mary Doyle to outline pros/cons around the creation of another performing arts school. This info is to be available for the December 5, 2011 ESAC meeting.
6. Brenda Pacheco to provide data for the last three years detailing results of auditions. Include how many students scored 10, 9, etc., also include the ranking of students both accepted and rejected for each year.
7. Brenda Pacheco to provide cut score data for each discipline for the last three years including highest to lowest ranking to fill seats.

**Motion** to adjourn was made by Commissioner White at 8:35 p.m.; seconded by Commissioner Powell.

The next meeting of the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee will be held on **Wednesday, December 7, 2011, at 6:00 p.m.**