

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Excellence in Student Achievement Committee Meeting
of the Whole
December 16, 2009 at 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

Attendance: Commissioner Van White (Chair), Commissioners Cynthia Elliott, Willa Powell, Allen Williams, District Staff: Mary Doyle, Jeanette Silvers, Robert Ulliman, Partners: Marcy DeJesus-Rueff, School Expeditionary Learning Schools; Julius Adams, Associate Dean, St. John Fisher College and Dr. Emeterio Otero, Executive Dean, Monroe Community College, Damon City Campus, Board Staff: Jacqueline Morgan

Absent: Commissioners Thomas Brennan, Melisza Campos and Malik Evans

Commissioner White called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

I. Minutes

Motion to approve November minutes was made by Commissioner Williams; seconded by Commissioner White. **Adopted 4-0 with Commissioners Brennan, Campos and Evans absent.**

II. Discussion of Resolution 485 (Early College High School) and Resolution 486 (Expeditionary Learning High School)

Ms. Mary Doyle briefed the committee on the proposals for the creation of two new schools. Before moving forward with the presentation Ms. Doyle allowed the Partners from Monroe Community College, St. John Fisher College and Expeditionary Learning Schools to introduce themselves to the committee. They are as follows: Marcy DeJesus-Rueff, School Designer, Expeditionary Learning Schools; Julius Adams, Associate Dean, St. John Fisher College and Dr. Emeterio Otero, Executive Dean, Monroe Community College, Damon City Campus.

Following the introductions, Ms. Doyle gave a PowerPoint presentation which highlights of the proposals for the new high schools. The highlights included the following:

- ♦ Core values, which includes achievement, equity and accountability. Both of the new schools' values reflect the core values. Students will

be able to achieve high levels of achievement, the schools will provide equitable opportunities for all students and there will be accountability for these schools.

- ♦ Creating a portfolio for change which involves urgency for change, courage and authority to make decisions, a clear focus on priorities and reliable data systems.
- ♦ The main goal is to ensure that each student is academically prepared to succeed in college, life and the global economy.
- ♦ The objective is to create an innovative portfolio of high quality choices for families.

Ms. Doyle noted that there will be a rigorous Early College High School, which will provide an opportunity to accelerate students towards post-secondary success while still in high school. The Integrated Arts and Technology High School will be project based and will use arts and technology as tools for learning.

Both of these schools will be small schools. They will both start with a grade each in 2010. The Expeditionary Learning High School will begin with 7th grade with about 75 students; the Arts and Technology High School will begin with 9th grade with no more than 100 students. Both schools will add a grade each year to become no more than 400 to 450 students, maximum enrollment.

Commissioners White and Elliott noted that there is concern in the community around student/teacher ratios and wanted more information as to what extent student/teacher ratio factored in the development of these schools. Ms. Doyle stated that what is important regarding student/teacher ratio is the overall structure of the school and how the school is designed and how the relationships are structured between students, staff and adults in the building. The focus is placed on the kind of options the students will have for mentors, the interaction they will have with mentors, college faculty, and advisors.

Early College High School: The mission of the Early College High School is to provide a college-going high school experience that accelerates students towards post-secondary success. This would allow students to experience college in high school settings; therefore, being engaged and challenged while thoughts of going on to college are being instilled in them while in high school.

It was noted by Ms. Doyle that the District has jointly applied for a Developmental Planning Grant with the State Education Department

that is funded through the Gates Foundation for \$500,000.00. They are still awaiting a response from State Ed regarding the status of the application at this point. However, the Asia Society has suggested that they would be willing to help with start up funding that would go towards some of the development that has to happen in terms of college liaisons, tuition, etc.

Mr. Otero noted that the Early College High School would prepare students to be successful in college and would help to guide them through high school.

Mr. Adams noted that there is a lot of research that supports the concept of exposing students to college early in a very structured fashion that lets them see that they can be successful in college. The goal of the Early College High School is to ensure that the students who enter this high school will not only have college credits, college experience and exposure to critical thinking; but will also have success.

Students will earn a minimum of 20 college credits while still in high school. This is what is meant when speaking of acceleration. Students would essentially enter into college with a year of credits already accumulated.

Ms. Doyle noted that it is important to hire principals for both of the schools early in order to help to ensure the success of both schools.

There was some concern about hiring of the principals from Commissioner Elliott. She wants to be sure that the principals will be appropriate fits for the schools and the population that they would be serving. Ms. Doyle noted that requirements for principals have all ready been put together around what kind of qualities are needed in the principals to ensure the right fit for both schools; and that all of the partners will also have input in the selection of the principals.

Commissioner White inquired as to what would happen if we are not successful in receiving the \$500,000.00 grant; will we still be able to move forward with creating the Early College High School. Ms. Doyle confirmed that the creation of the school would still move forward because we don't necessarily need the grant. This is a planning grant. The idea of the grant is that it is a Smart Scholars Program that New York State is sponsoring across the state. They're looking to develop 23 early college high schools state-wide. So it was thought to be an opportunity in general to provide a policy window for the things that would have to happen to support early college high schools, to have other colleagues across the state and to provide a support opportunity.

(Commissioner Elliott left at 6:30 p.m.)

Integrated Arts and Technology High School: The mission of the school is to provide an advanced learning environment by providing a unique approach to secondary education by creating a personalized, project-based curriculum; it will be a school where all students are known well and challenged to meet high expectations.

The District already has three expeditionary learning schools in its portfolio. They are School No. 10, School No. 58 and School Without Walls Foundation Academy. Not only does Expeditionary Learning Schools have a national track record, but it has a local track record here as well.

Ms. DeJesus-Rueff noted that the Integrated Arts and Technology High School will embody a learning style that students and families are looking for in the District. The school will have a curriculum where arts are fully integrated into the curriculum so that students are learning while experiencing some of their learning in and through the arts. As this is a college preparatory program, the students will have very high expectations placed on them; and students will have an opportunity for some potential college credits. But, primarily the goal is to provide a rigorous, relevant high school curriculum with opportunities for adult relationships so that all of the kids are extremely well known and not have just one adult person that they can turn to if they need help or assistance, but several.

Ms. Doyle noted that this high school will infuse art throughout, as well as technology.

Ms. Doyle noted that this school will come with \$450,000.00 for a start-up funding. It will be used mainly for professional development opportunities.

Commissioner Williams expressed concern that there was nothing stated in regards to the cost or location of the two new schools. He is concerned that the Board is being asked to make a commitment without being provided with funding details; especially funding for tuition at MCC and St. John Fisher.

Ms. Doyle stated that there are examples of other MOUs from across the country that they have been looking at that are being used as models. Also, the funding for the two principals are budgeted in the current fiscal year budgeting.

Commissioner White shared concern around funding and wants to know the plan for funding the schools. Commissioner Powell agrees that college tuition is a major obstacle and that funding for tuition has not been provided for.

Commissioner White asked what would happen if the Board did not vote on these resolutions at the Board's Business meeting? Ms. Doyle responded that the urgency is around hiring aligning with the placement timelines, aligning with the Academic Showcase, aligning with all the structures and processes that must be facilitated so that these schools will be ready to open in 2010.

Ms. DeJesus-Rueff noted that if the resolution for the Expeditionary Learning High School fails, the \$450,000.00 in Gates funding would not be guaranteed to be available at a later time because they need to have enough upfront time in order to make the school a success in September.

Resolutions 485 and 486 will be advanced to the Board without recommendation.

(Commissioner Williams left at 7:30 p.m.)

III. **Data.cation Presentation**

Paul LoBoen and Peter Bencivenga from CaseNex, the company who produces Data.cation, gave a comprehensive hands-on presentation of the program.

Included in the Data.cation system is a program that utilizes web based applications to support schools in regards to NCLB. The program is capable of providing previous years data, current year data and future projections. The program is scientifically aligned to NCLB utilizing real, tangible data.

The presenters noted that this system is built to advance the needs of the end user; and as such is a tool to aid in gathering data related to performance indices, tracking students in a particular cohort, keeping track of test performance, qualitative data on parent engagement and much more.

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Powell at 8:25 p.m.; seconded by Commissioner White. **Adopted 2-0.**

The next Excellence in Student Achievement Committee meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2010 at 5:30 p.m.