

Quality Assurance Committee

December 10, 2007

Minutes

Attendance:

Chairwoman Thompson, Commissioner Brennan, Board Staff L. Dunsmoor, District staff S. Kaufmann, C. Holloway, C. Leech, M. Hancock, J. Carlisle, R. Boyle, Principals A. Abdulmateen, V. Ramos, M. Andrecolich-Diaz, T. Mains.

Chairwoman Thompson called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. and noted that Commissioner White had a last-minute scheduling conflict and was excused. She asked Commissioner Brennan if he had any adjustments to the agenda. Commissioner Brennan said that on behalf of the Board and the Committee, he wanted to thank Chairwoman Thompson for her long dedication, integrity, diligence and civility as a Board member and as QA Chair. Chairwoman Thompson thanked him and noted that QA is an important committee and she will provide some recommendations to the 2008 configuration of the committee. (Chairwoman Thompson is leaving the Board Dec. 31 after two terms -- eight years -- as a Commissioner, Board Vice President, and President.)

Agenda Items

1. Schools Under Registration Review Report

Coordinating Director of School Improvement Susan Kaufmann discussed the SURR plans and district-level supports for the three schools under registration review: the International Finance Career High School at Franklin, Jefferson High School, and Monroe High School. The plans must be submitted to the State Education Department and require Board approval. The SURR plans for each school were written by teacher/administrator teams with input from parents. The improvement focus is on literacy, math and graduation rates. Remedies include professional development, specialized programs for students, student materials and technology. The initiatives are funded by additional allocations of federal, state and local dollars. Progress on the SURR plans are monitored/evaluated through School-Based Planning Teams, the State Education Department, the Office of School Development and Academics, and via Superintendent visits/progress analysis.

Commissioner discussion focused on parent input in the process. Principals reported that they had varying degrees of formal input and had used informal information gathering -- discussing the issues with parents when parents visited. Franklin Principal Ali Abdulmateen speculated that parent interest focuses more on their individual students rather than on the whole school. All the principals pointed out there was a very short time frame -- because of New York State timing -- in which to gather input and write the report. All also reported that letters and other written materials were provided to all parents regarding SURR status. Jefferson Principal Andrecolich-Diaz reported that many of her parents told her that they had received all the information they needed in the written materials and didn't see a need to attend informational meetings. The principals also said that transportation to school and engaging parents at the end of the school year are barriers to participation. They all reported using creative methods to engage parents, including Saturday sessions, afternoon sessions, and evening sessions.

Chairwoman Thompson and Commissioner Brennan noted that parent engagement is a recurring theme, and that the Board is frequently asked to make decisions that include the parent engagement process without any data indicating the quality of the process. Principals can assist the Board by providing written evidence, even if it is anecdotal, regarding their efforts to engage parents. That type of data would be extremely helpful to the Board.

A large binder of information was provided to the Committee for its review by administration. In the absence of Commissioner White and with respect to the volume of information provided, Chairwoman Thompson said a recommendation for approval of the SURR plans should wait until January 2008. In the meantime, Commissioners will spend more time reviewing the reports, submit additional questions in the next 10 days to Board Staff Linda Dunsmoor, and Chairwoman Thompson will provide an executive summary for

the 2008 Quality Assurance Committee so that it can act in January. She will discuss this process at the Board meeting.

Action items:

Commissioners to provide additional questions by December 21.

Chairwoman Thompson to provide executive summary for 2008 committee.

2. Frederick Douglass Preparatory School Phasing-Out Plan

Coordinating Director of School Improvement Susan Kaufmann discussed the Douglass closing process initiated last spring following the Commissioner's announcement on March 15, 2007 that he would close the school. On the Superintendent's recommendation, the Board approved a plan on April 19 to close Douglass completely effective June 2007. Two existing schools, the Northeast and Northwest College Preparatory Schools, were moved intact into the building. The plan must be submitted to the State Education Department and requires Board approval.

Parents were notified by letter dated May 3 of informational meetings May 14 and 17 for seventh/eighth-grade students and their parents so they could select a new high school. Meetings were also held for parents/students on weekends and in the afternoon. Principal Vicky Ramos said she, other administrators and counselors reached out extensively to parents regarding the process -- in writing, by phone, and via email. Nearly 800 students were sent transfer choice letters; 445 requested school assignments and of those, nearly all were placed in their first or second-choice school. Another approximately 100 students' school was dictated by program options, leaving approximately 200 students to be placed by the Placement Office in various schools. All staff members were placed in other buildings according to contractual guidelines.

Again, committee discussion focused on parent involvement/engagement. Chairwoman Thompson said the outreach efforts of Ms. Ramos and her staff were laudable and the Board appreciates the information because of ongoing questions regarding how accessible district schools are to parents.

Motion to recommend approval of Frederick Douglass Preparatory School Phasing-Out Plan to the Board by Commissioner Brennan. Second by Chairwoman Thompson. Adopted 2-0 with Commissioner White absent.

3. Professional Development Plans

Director of Professional Development Rebecca Boyle and Chief of Leadership and Diversity Michele Hancock discussed the District's PD plan for 2007-1010. The plan must be submitted to the State Education Department and requires Board approval.

The plan delineates how PD is aligned with content and student performance standards; designed to demonstrate how classroom instruction/teacher practice will be improved and assessed; and is structured so that teachers with a professional certificate have the opportunity to complete at least 175 hours of PD every five years. It is also intended to support new teachers through the Mentor Program and SAVE Legislation training. PD is available to all district teachers. Data analysis is used to improve student performance and teacher practice. Effective Professional Development puts students at the center; considers multiple sources of data measured against standards; is collegial, collaborative, and built into the day-to-day work of teaching; connects theory with practice, enabling teachers to develop further expertise about children, content, and pedagogy; is self-directed, career-level appropriate, and reflective; supports multiculturalism; is continuous; focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement; and is valued by all.

The plan was developed by a team including representation from RTA, ASAR, management cabinet and other stakeholders. It reflects the Strategic Framework forwarded by the administration and adopted by the Board. It was developed to ensure that teachers will understand and implement standards-based instructional strategies across curricular areas.

Chairwoman Thompson asked about multiculturalism. Ms. Boyle said it refers to training for teachers working with students from all different cultures. Parent Beth Laidlaw, who participated in the plan development and attended the QA meeting, discussed the difference one training session had made in the classrooms of two teachers she knew, both in approach and in atmosphere. School 50 Principal Tim Mains

noted that learning is a social experience, and when professional development is effective, progress will be visible in students.

Ms. Boyle said Professional Development also needs to be concerned with the “unconsciously unskilled,” or people who don’t know what they don’t know. Chairwoman Thompson pointed out that follow-up is critical to ensure that skills learned in PD translate into the classroom and into student achievement. She also asked about PD for para-professionals and BENTE employees. Ms. Hancock said her department is taking on that task and the PD will be developed.

Motion by Commissioner Brennan to recommend approval of the PD Plan to the full Board. Second by Chairwoman Thompson. Adopted 2-0 with Commissioner White excused.

Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Brennan. Second by Commissioner Thompson. Adopted 2-0 at 7:58 p.m.