

# Rochester Board of Education Quality Assurance Committee

## Minutes Monday, June 11, 2007

**Attendance:** Commissioners S. Thompson, C. Elliott, V. White (arrived 6:15 p.m.); Board staff L. Dunsmoor; Interim Superintendent W. Cala and administrators K. Dyce-Faucette, M. Cianca, C. Holloway, M. Hancock, L. Stone, G. Sullivan, A. MacGowan.

Chairwoman Shirley Thompson convened the meeting at 6 p.m. Commissioner Elliott asked that a discussion of the drop-out age be added to the agenda.

### **Major Achievement Program presentation**

Director L. Stone walked commissioners through a presentation detailing the history and current status of the program, which serves students in Grades 4-6 with strengths in academic potential, aptitude and performance. The citywide program is offered at Schools 4, 12, 23, 28, 50, 43 and 45.

### ***Discussion***

Commissioner Elliott asked about the cost of the program. Ms. Stone said program funding is part of the individual building budget; although teachers are assigned to the program they are not additional teachers for the building. The classrooms are supplied and resourced in the same way other classrooms are. Chairwoman Thompson pointed out that the classrooms have lower student-teacher ratios than other classrooms.

**Action:** Determine and provide cost of program. (C. Holloway, M. Cianca/due Monday, June 25)

Chairwoman Thompson asked about evaluations of the program. Mr. MacGowan said the program was evaluated as part of the Javits grant process (a former funding source) and he would locate the most recent evaluation.

**Action:** Provide evaluation from Javits application. (A. MacGowan/due Monday, June 25)

Commissioner Elliott questioned why the program is not offered at every school; when students have to leave their neighborhoods in order to attend, it makes it difficult for parents to participate, attend school functions, etc. She noted that the program is not offered in the inner-city portion of the district, i.e. Schools 2, 9, 22 and 14 (Chairwoman Thompson noted that #45 is inner-city). She asked about academic results and Ms. Stone said 100 percent of participants pass the state assessments.

Commissioner Elliott asked how students are selected. Ms. Stone said by using results from Grade 3 NYS assessments, principal and teacher recommendations, and general intellectual ability. A committee looks at the 'whole child' during the selection process.

Commissioner White said his older children participated in the program and he was very happy that they did. He posited that all students in the District should be exposed to the elements of the program: acceleration and enrichment, a challenging and integrated curriculum, study skills, research techniques, etc. Ms. Stone agreed and said that is why all teachers should be differentiating instruction.

Commissioner White also noted inferences that the program skims the highest achieving students from buildings, affecting test scores and the other students. Ms. Stone concurred and confirmed that the test scores of MAP students are counted in the MAP school they attend, not the school they would attend if not in MAP.

Commissioner Elliott said students want to and should be able to stay in their own schools and still have access to the program.

Chairwoman Thompson asked if enrollment shifts had occurred in the program over the years. Dr. Cala said the institutional history of the program is not available. Commissioner Thompson suggested the program be looked at in the context of what the District is today.

**Action:** Provide enrollment data from the past five years broken down by race and gender. (C. Holloway, M. Cianca/due Monday, June 25)

Commissioner White said the program was likely intended to combat white flight and it may be time to dismantle the program and require that all schools provide the benefits of MAP to all students. If the program were to be dismantled, he asked whether it would mean class sizes could be reduced.

Chairwoman Thompson asked if it would require additional teachers; she noted that current textbooks are supposedly designed to enable teachers to deliver instruction to students representing a range of learning styles and levels in one classroom.

Dr. Cala and it wouldn't require additional teachers, but more training. Ms. Holloway noted that differentiating instruction is not a simple matter and requires professional development. Ms. Stone said that differentiating instruction would require a huge professional development effort, but differentiation can be done and does work. Chairwoman Thompson asked where the middle ground may be between dismantling the program and providing the services to all students in all elementary schools. Dr. Cala said one idea would be to use a specific school as an exemplar of how MAP benefits could be replicated for all students.

**Action:** Describe how could the practices/benefits of the program be replicated and provided to students throughout District. (C. Holloway, M. Cianca/due Monday, June 25)

Commissioner Elliott asked what the test scores are of MAP students, whether the program has helped overall, and what happens when MAP students enter secondary school. Dr. Cala said a better analysis would be to show how students who scored in the high 3s and 4s in state exams but did not enter the program do academically compared to students who did enter the program.

**Action:** Test score data to be provided to Ms. Dunsmoor, who will prepare comparison achievement data on students scoring in the high 3s and 4s who are not in the program with achievement scores of students who are in the program. (C. Holloway, M. Cianca/due Monday, June 25)

Regarding the lack of state and federal grant funds for MAP, Commissioner White said decisions affecting the program should be made with local funding in mind.

In response to Chairwoman Thompson, Ms. Stone said that the high staff turnover rate is attributable to age and attrition of teachers. The criteria for MAP teachers are five years of teaching and experience in project-based learning, differentiated instruction, etc.

## **African and African American Studies Department update**

Ms. Hancock said the job description for director of the department has been posted for two weeks; candidates are being sought locally and nationally. She has been meeting with local experts for scholarly feedback on the department and to receive names of those who may be willing to serve on an advisory panel for the department. She is also developing interview questions for the candidate selection process. Responding to questions from Commissioners, Ms. Hancock said she envisions that the department will infuse African and African American culture into the existing curriculum; it will not be an add-on or in conflict with current NYS assessment preparation. There could be electives offered at the secondary level.

### ***Discussion***

Commissioner White noted that Ms. Hancock has done an excellent job developing the department, but believes that action is still required at the policy level by the Board. He learned of the advertisement for the director position by reading the Administrative Bulletin and would like to be informed of items such as this earlier. He also said he would like to be part of the advisory panel for the department. Commissioner White suggested that his initial policy be brought back to QA for discussion at a second meeting in June. Motion by Commissioner Elliott, second by Commissioner White to have second meeting and discuss the proposed policy. Adopted 3-0.

**Action:** Poll committee for available dates. (L. Dunsmoor complete by Friday, June 15)  
Provide names of community members contacted regarding department.  
(M. Hancock/due Monday, June 25)

### **Other**

Committee members discussed the status of Commissioner Elliott's proposal to raise the age students can drop out of school from 16 to 17. Commissioner Thompson said Board staff will report on July agenda items and she will see if that discussion can be added. Dr. Cala said the 2005-06 year-end data has been reformatted to reflect New York State's new reporting system of graduation rates and he can provide the information to the committee.

**Action:** L. Dunsmoor to provide July agenda items to Commissioner Thompson. (Friday, June 15)  
W. Cala will provide reformatted 2005-06 year-end data. (due Monday, June 25)

Committee members also discussed the Grade 5 Social Studies textbook purchase approved by QA and adopted by the full Board in the Fall of 2006. A photo in the textbook showed Colonial Williamsburg slaves dressed well and smiling, which committee members pointed out was objectionable. Alternatives to the textbook purchase were not identified as acceptable at the time, including cutting out the offensive page. Committee members want to know details around the professional development provided to ensure that the picture became a teachable moment for students and staff.

**Action:** How is the impact of the professional development (around the disputed picture) that was provided to teachers being measured, i.e., what is happening in the classroom when this picture is discussed.  
C. Holloway/M. Cianca will provide information, due Monday, June 25.

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner White. Second by Commissioner Elliott. Adopted 3-0 at 7:50 p.m.

