

Rochester Board of Education  
Quality Assurance Committee

Minutes  
Monday, April 16, 2007

**Attendance:** Commissioners S. Thompson, C. Elliott; Commissioner White participated via telephone from a conference in San Francisco; Board staff L. Dunsmoor; Administrators M. Cianca, C. Holloway, J. Silvers..

Chairwoman Shirley Thompson convened the meeting at 6 p.m. and moved agenda item 7 to the top of the agenda to accommodate a presenter's schedule.

**New Accountability System**

New York State is retroactively instituting new accountability measures regarding the calculation of graduation rates. The new reporting system, announced unexpectedly by the Commissioner of Education, decreased the District's graduation rate by several percentage points. J. Silvers from Research, Evaluation and Testing explained the new measures.

***Discussion***

In response to questions from Commissioners, administrators said:

- The information had just been received;
- The District collects additional data besides what New York State requires -- i.e. Cohort 2006;
- The graduation rate will decrease because more students are being counted -- the denominator used in determining the percentage will be larger;
- The District is considering methods of tracking students who leave the District;
- The graduation rate will drop from 52 percent to 39 percent using the new measures.

Action: Identify the policy/practice governing drop-outs, including at what point students are determined to have dropped out and what steps are taken before students drop out.

Request that Community and Intergovernmental Relations take up the matter of why NYS changed the reporting system and the ramifications of it for urban districts.

**Diversity Initiative/Culture Change/HR**

Chief of Diversity Michele Hancock provided written information from Chief of Human Resources Joanne Giuffrida. Ms. Giuffrida said Human Resources reviews all applications for teaching/administrative positions. Those candidates who are believed to represent diversity and who meet the position qualifications are referred for interviews with subject area directors and/or school principals. If a diversity candidate is not selected in one school, HR staff will continue to refer the candidate to other schools with the goal of achieving a successful placement. Ms. Hancock also provided information from the Career in Teaching program regarding retention rates of teachers broken down by Caucasian/Minority.

Discussion

Commissioner White wanted to know how many African Americans (people of color) have applied and not been hired and how many Caucasians have applied and been hired. He discussed anecdotal evidence that African Americans have a difficult time getting into the district and cited Arkee Allen.

Commissioner Elliott questioned the definition of performance; how is performance defined and what is acceptable in terms of excellent, good, etc. She questioned how many persons of color leave before they are tenured based on someone's pre-conceived notion of performance. She also said the Board needs to clarify with district leadership what it expects from the Department of Diversity and Leadership Development.

Action: Provide information on how many African Americans have applied and not been hired and how many Caucasians have applied and been hired.  
Provide the definition of performance; what is acceptable in terms of excellent, good, etc. How many persons of color leave before they are tenured

Ms. Hancock said she can provide some of the information out of CIT; she and Ms. Giuffrida would both prefer that Ms. Giuffrida provide her information directly to the committee.

Chair Thompson suggested the Committee develop specific questions and expectations in writing for additional guidance to administration.

### **Gay Straight Alliance Update**

Director of Staff Development Rebecca Boyle reported that a survey to be completed regarding the treatment of students with alternative lifestyles can be done more efficiently as part of the annual Olweus Bullying Survey than it can as a stand-alone survey. Results from the 2007 survey will answer some of the committee's questions and be available in July 2007. Additional questions can be embedded for the 2008 survey.

### **Discussion**

Responding to Commissioner Thompson, Ms. Boyle reported that the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) is satisfied with the proposed method of surveying students. Ms. Boyle will meet with GLSEN the third week of July to discuss the results of the 2007 survey.

### **African & African American Studies Department Update**

Ms. Hancock shared the timeline for development of the Office of African and African-American Studies Department. A director is to be hired by May 30, 2007 with the office operational by June 30, 2007. Planning, development and curricula review will take place from July through October, 2007. Implementation and assessment of pilot projects scheduled for November 2007 through April 2008. The overall goal is to establish a standards-based instructional system that is responsive and reflective of African and African-American cultural traditions, practices and experiences for all students in the district.

Commissioner Elliott asked about scores at Charlotte High School. Dr. Cianca said that at one time, Charlotte had a higher proportion of special education students than other buildings. When the District eliminated middle schools and moved to a grades 7-12 secondary configuration, it provided the opportunity to better balance the

## DRAFT; Not Approved by Chair

special education/general education students throughout secondary schools, but there are still some schools with a higher proportion of special education students than other schools.

Commissioner White asked how many schools are performing at the 150 score math target established by New York State. Chairwoman Thompson requested a list of where all schools are regarding the performance index; J. Silvers said she would provide the data.

**ACTION: J. Silvers to provide list of where schools are regarding the performance index.** (Completed.)

Commissioner Elliott asked if there is a process in place if a teacher does not participate in professional development offerings. C. Holloway confirmed that there is; if teachers do not attend the required professional development, corrective actions will be initiated.

Commissioner White asked about specifics regarding the improvement process at Frederick Douglass School, which the District recently announced would close at the end of the 2006-07 school year. Mr. Washousky briefly discussed the improvement plan at Frederick Douglass. Mr. Washousky inferred that if the District hadn't decided to close Frederick Douglass, the State would have. He said he would provide copies of the original SURR report issued in 2002. Commissioner Elliott pointed out that if Commissioners were made more aware of particular issues faced by the District at the State level, they could be more effective policy amendment advocates.

**Action:** M. Washousky to provide 2002 SURR report for Frederick Douglass. (Completed.)  
L. Dunsmoor to provide the suspension rate at Douglass and distribute to committee.

Commissioner Elliott asked whether students' opinions are part of the school improvement plan process and Mr. Washousky confirmed that they are.

Chairwoman Thompson asked for specifics of monthly reviews. Mr. Washousky explained that state representatives visit classrooms and cross-check the improvement plan to monitor implementation.

**Action:** L. Dunsmoor to provide copies of the improvement plans for Frederick Douglass, Franklin High School and Monroe High School for C. Elliott. (Completed.)

### Legal Drop-Out Age

Commissioner Elliott said students may simply need more time to ensure that they make a mature decision regarding leaving school before earning a diploma. She would like the Board to petition the state to allow Rochester to increase the legal drop-out age to 18. The committee agreed by consensus to send this proposal to the Board's Community and Intergovernmental Relations Committee for discussion.

### Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner White. Second by Chairwoman Thompson. Adopted 3-0 at 8:50 p.m.