

Rochester Board of Education Quality Assurance Committee

Minutes of May 8, 2006

Attendance: Commissioners Thompson and Henley; Board staff Linda Dunsmoor, District administrators Marie Cianca, Cheryl Holloway, Michele Hancock, Michael Christman, Paul Lampe and others. Commissioner Elliott absent.

There was no formal agenda for the meeting; Commissioner Thompson convened it at 6 p.m. Meeting topics were the Quarterly Academic Achievement Report; follow-up on the District in Corrective Action (DICA) ELA audit; and a textbook adoption proposal for Grade 11 Social Studies.

QUARTERLY ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT REPORT

Quality Assurance reviews student academic achievement on a quarterly and annual basis. Michael Christman, Managing Director of Research, Evaluation & Testing, provided the report. Academic data is not included in this report because the information from NYS assessments is not available. Dr. Christman expects that English Language Arts (ELA) scores will be available in late August and Math scores at the end of September.

Key points/Discussion:

- New York State will establish achievement benchmarks in June and July. These benchmarks are used to determine which districts are meeting the state standards, are not meeting the state standards, or are making progress on meeting the state standards (Adequate Yearly Progress).
- In response to Commissioner Thompson, Dr. Christman said academic achievement data is used to guide instruction by pinpointing what skills need to be worked on. When the data are disaggregated, the information is used in written and verbal communications among directors, chiefs, and principals. The data identifies learning distractors, which areas need more emphasis, and which areas need additional reinforcement.
- The disaggregated data will be more readily available next year when it is made available on the district's intranet.
- Grades K-6 attendance is holding steady at 92 percent.
- Grades 7-12 attendance is continuing at 84 percent.
- Short-term suspensions
 - K-6: 785 to date for 2005-06 compared to 722 to same date for 2004-05
 - 7-12: 1,565 to date for 2005-06 compared to 1,406 to same date for 2004-05
- Long-term suspensions
 - K-6: 46 to date for 2005-06 compared to 60 to same date for 2004-05
 - 7-12: 215 to date for 2005-06 compared to 177 to same date for 2004-05

Action item:

Dr. Christman will provide suspension data broken down by grade level.

DISTRICT IN CORRECTIVE ACTION (DICA) AUDIT UPDATE

The District is being audited by New York State because it did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA for three consecutive years: 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04. The audit process lead by Dr. Marie Cianca is being completed in conjunction with District staff by Learning Point Associates and Education Resource Strategies. The audit began in August 2005; a final audit report and three-year action plan will be submitted to the Board of Education and New York State in June. Quality Assurance has been monitoring the DICA audit since October.

Key Points

- Audit tasks include identifying trends in student performance, data collection, identification of appropriate strategies and action steps, and a review of instructional program data. Staff, students, and parents have participated in various parts of the Audit.
- Based on the findings of the Audit, recommendations include:
 - Use data systematically to inform ELA decision-making
 - Increase performance of English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities
 - Review the ELA curriculum for depth/breadth of standards and consistent implementation
 - Provide consistent and equitable learning opportunities for English Language Learners/Limited English Proficient students and for Students with Disabilities
 - Ensure the accountability of Principals for managing Professional Development resources
 - Integrate the Literacy Plan into the District Plan
 - Align funding to instructional goals
 - Develop a multi-year Professional Development plan
 - Establish time for teacher teams to work with Instructional Specialists
- Two goals arose from the Audit
 - Increase the performance of all students in ELA and narrow the gaps in subpopulations
 - Develop a system that clearly demonstrates accountability for District and school progress
- A three-year Action Plan addressing the two goals has been developed and includes identifying strategies, success indicators/evidence, and actions.
- The Action Plan will be funded through the reallocation of \$4 million in local funds, Title I funds, and Title IIa funds. The District is applying for additional New York State Education Department funding of \$1.7 million.

Discussion

In response to Commissioner Thompson, Marie Cianca said that teachers and administrators will have information they need to assess student learning needs and these assessments will be on-going.

Commissioner Henley asked about supports to supplement Professional Development. Cheryl Holloway said teachers will not be overwhelmed with new instructional strategies without the support to implement them. Literacy specialists and Academic Intervention Specialists as well as school administrators will support teachers in the classroom. Commissioner Henley reiterated his concern that teachers receive follow-up to Professional Development sessions and Ms. Holloway assured him that the plan for professional support will be developed so as not to overwhelm teachers and will allow teaching staff time to learn and use strategies successfully . Commissioner Henley emphasized that the District is dedicating \$4 million to this effort for 2006-07; he wants to be sure that processes are in place to promote success.

Commissioner Henley raised the issue of whether there is anything the Board can do to promote an earlier return of test scores from New York State; he noted that the information is not received for Grade 4 until the students are in Grade 5.

Commissioner Thompson noted that the plan reflects many of the points she has stressed over the years: that ‘best practices’ be identified and used, that initiatives are spread across the district, “tools” are provided to do the job, that monitoring is built in, and the financial information is in place. She asked whether there was any discussion through the DICA process of narrowing the number of ELA Comprehensive Reform Models used in the District -- America’s Choice, Reading First, Success For All, Expeditionary Learning etc. Ms. Holloway responded that the Rochester Instructional Framework used the best practices from each of these models as well as other research based models. Michele Hancock added that it would not be wise to homogenize programs across the district; schools should be allowed to make decisions on program models that represent the best fit.

Attachment:

Rochester’s Nine Essential Standards

TEXTBOOK ADOPTION: “AMERICA PATHWAYS TO THE PRESENT” GRADE 11 SOCIAL STUDIES

Quality Assurance examines textbook recommendations forwarded by district administration and determines whether they should be forwarded to the full Board of Education for adoption. Director of Social Studies Paul Lampe made the presentation.

Key Points:

- A committee determined that the proposed text best met the criteria it established; criteria included NYS Learning Standards/Regents Examination preparation, hands-on activities, inquiry-based learning, literacy skills, students’ individual learning styles, Spanish language availability and technology opportunities.
- Exact translations of the text and corollary materials are available in Spanish and will be provided to students who need them.
- 2,500 books will be ordered (100 Spanish texts); this is enough for every student to have a copy of his/her own to take home.
- Personal copies of a review guide for the U.S. History and Government Regents Examination will be provided for each student for the next five years.
- Several textbook companies were rejected because the texts did not reflect the diversity of the District. Several supplements to this book complement the diversity of students in the District and emphasize the roles and contributions of minority populations in U.S. history.

Discussion

Commissioner Henley said the regents review guide will be of immense help to students. He noted that the recent Advanced Placement World History exam had a key question reflecting women and minorities; the College Board is pushing diversity and that will help push textbook publishers to be more inclusive. In response to Commissioner Thompson, Mr. Lampe said that Perry Ground of the Native American Resource Center worked with the committee studying this textbook. Commissioner Thompson said she was glad to see the Latino heritage reflected in the textbook, although it is still lacking. She said the District needs to strive to ensure that Latinos do not feel invisible, given that our society tends to be Black- and White-oriented.

Motion by Commissioner Henley to forward recommendation for adoption to Board of Education. Second by Commissioner Thompson. Carried with Commissioner Elliott absent.

Motion to adjourn at 7:40 p.m. carried.