

**Quality Assurance Committee Meetings**  
**June 9, 2005**

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Commissioner Thompson  
Commissioner Bowers

**Staff Members in Attendance:**

Kimberly Rohring  
Dr. Manuel Rivera  
Michael Chan  
Kevin Klein  
Michael Christman  
Marie Cianca  
Cheryl Holloway  
Jana Carlisle  
Kim Dyce  
Barbara Jarzyniecki

Meeting convened at 6:10 p.m.

Diversity Initiative Presentation

Commissioner Thompson invited the consultants to present.

Questions:

Commissioner Thompson asked about the impact of poverty on diversity in this district

A: Rebecca responded that all large urban districts experience poverty so that the interviewers did not attempt to study the impact of poverty. Poverty is concentrated; race issue. Initiative has to be focused on making Hispanic and African-American children succeed.

Commissioner Bowers asked how the interviewers operationalized / defined the term diversity so that each of the people interviewed would be responding to the same questions

A: Rebecca, when spoken to, many interviewees defined the term by indicating that diversity is not just race but includes ways of thinking, ways of behaving, sexual preference, religious preference. Interviewees felt that diversity should not be defined narrowly.

Commissioner Thompson indicated that interviewees provided the definition of diversity.

Commissioner Bowers understood that the body of knowledge of the interviewers included only attitudinal information, not documents such as the mission, vision, values, policies, etc. of the District. Is this correct?

A: Rebecca did not try to review programs and documents.

Commissioner Bowers followed up with the question about whether or not the wording of the documents addresses diversity.

A: Rebecca responded in the affirmative; however the study did not include an evaluation of documents.

Commissioner Bowers went on to ask whether or not the study reviewed programs and the extent to which diversity was in evidence in those programs and documents.

A: Rebecca answered in the negative.

Commissioner Bowers went on to say that what the study does is portray opinions. What you then have is that there is a disconnect between District policy and attitudes of those interviewed. He went on to ask if programs were reviewed as well and pointed out that the evaluation is predominantly opinion oriented and does not include data that includes evaluation of the application of diversity – attitudes alone cannot be the basis of policy. Also, identified that interviewees were not a representative sample, which allow the reviewers to generalize the population, but instead used a reputational analysis. He sees this as having limited utility as its information cannot be used to drive policy or new programs. He also asked whether or not there had been review of existing and/or previous District programs and initiatives surrounding diversity, whether or not they were effective at achieving RCSD goals and whether that success was long term or short lived.

Commissioner Thompson moved the discussion to include Dr. Rivera's response to the diversity report of Idea Connections.

Dr. Rivera reviewed immediate action items in order to respond to the implications of the report – regardless of whether or not the report was attitudinal rather than based on evaluations of programs and District policy. Dr. Rivera stated we need to take more aggressive steps to recruit, select, hire and retain minority staff with an emphasis on teachers and administrators.

1. getting a structure in place
2. creating our plan
3. examining our policies
4. recruiting diverse staff
5. diversifying vendors

The leadership team will also identify additional action steps.

Commissioner Bowers expressed a desire for step #2 to include review of the effectiveness of current policies and some program evaluation (both of existing and previous) to determine what has and has not worked before taking “aggressive steps”. Need to set measurable targets; should be done throughout. Also asked for a clear definition of diversity.

Commissioner Thompson indicated that she had a similar point about the policies; what is working, what is not working with policies that are already in place.

Commissioner Thompson further identified a point made in the Idea Connections report regarding how to move forward with the tension between recruiting more diverse staff while also balancing this with tenure and a senior staff (page 27, next to last bullet in report, which is an individual's comments)

A: Rebecca indicated that in most urban districts principals are hamstrung by not being able to hire who they want so that more experienced teachers get the coveted jobs whereas the less experienced teachers get the most difficult jobs

Commissioner Thompson asked about the dollars earmarked for implementation

Dr. Rivera indicated that \$100,000 in his professional & technical services line is to be devoted to this initiative but that he would have a better idea after the plan gets finalized.

Commissioner Thompson expressed concern about the accelerated timeline and whether or not the leadership team would actually be able to start their work with a level of understanding.

Dr. Rivera concurred that the July deliverables focused on Leadership Team formation, whereas the Leadership Team is more of an oversight group. The majority of the work that will unfold will come from staff in the District and those comprising the design teams.

Commissioner Bowers referred to a book, *Working within Culture*, which is particularly applied to public education (he plans to send a copy and citation) in order to highlight that changing cultures is extremely difficult. He expressed the desire to get at the root causes of the perceptions and state of diversity.

Dr. Rivera indicated that changing the culture requires outside help because the culture is so entrenched and that there will be relationships established to provide ongoing support to changing the culture.

Commissioner Thompson expressed concern that the ethnic diversity and diversity of thinking are not mutually exclusive and asked that Dr. Rivera clarify that as he moves forward.

#### Quarterly Academic Achievement Report

Ms. Carlisle introduced the quarterly Quality Assurance Report and asked whether or not there were questions about the template.

Commissioner Thompson asked specifically about the 8<sup>th</sup> grade drop in Rochester and although Ms. Carlisle indicated that Ms. Cianca and Holloway would cover this in their presentation, she asked for a response prior to their presentation.

Ms. Cianca set the context by indicating that 8<sup>th</sup> grade scores are fairly flat across the state and that the Deputy Commissioner referred to 8<sup>th</sup> grade as the Bermuda Triangle of education. She further identified the need to align grades 5 – 9, individual student diagnoses and how to use information on individual students. She went on to highlight a summer literacy institute, greater stability and more experienced teachers, among other strategies, but did not fully indicate how they would be implemented or the anticipated impact.

Commissioner Thompson asked about the 5-9 alignment.

Ms. Cianca indicated that Rochester actually has an advantage given the 7-12 configuration and the fact that there will not be movement, and that the State has only recently provided grade level expectations, rather than having a focus on "primary" or "intermediate" or on a specific grade level. She went on to identify the problem at Level 2 and is thus focusing on literacy, including a program called Fast-Forward and Read 180, which will be piloted this summer.

Ms. Holloway also indicated that professional development focused on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers to provide them with necessary strategies.

Commissioner Bowers asked about the relationship between Benchmark Assessment schools and pilots of these literacy programs to determine if the programs make a difference. He indicated that this may be a way to test specific products.

Ms. Cianca indicated that it was perceived that Fast-Forward was only for those with neuro processing disorders however that it has demonstrated success with other students as well and that the District would

also like to look at Read 180 and whether or not it has broader applicability. She also said that the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) could provide comparative data.

Commissioner Thompson asked if she should be upset that attendance at the elementary level had dropped.

Ms. Cianca and Holloway indicated that they did have concerns and had discussed what might be causing this. They have hypothesized that elementary choice may be contributing to this decrease because of students missing the bus and not necessarily being close enough to walk.

Ms. Cianca went through the ELA presentation and highlighted that common high expectations, rigorous standards and curriculum and the right interventions, along with solid instruction, contributed to closing the achievement gap between whites and other. She further referred to Ardeth Cole's book on better answers and how certain schools are using her work. She also highlighted that those elementary schools showing growth were all using Readers and Writer's Workshop.

#### Environmental Science and Sixth Grade Social Studies Textbook Recommendations

Commissioner Bowers interjected to ask if the Committee could vote on the textbook resolutions. He had two specific questions, about how we plan to address the Spanish text issue with Science and why 6<sup>th</sup> grade was hanging out there in terms of the social studies text book adoption.

Michael Chan indicated that we were requesting that the text be translated into Spanish by the publisher and trying to offer some creative solutions to meet the need – if RCSD finds a translator, publisher pays for. He noted that none of the texts considered are available in Spanish.

Kevin Klein indicated that the 6<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum is aligned with the other grade levels. At the 6<sup>th</sup> grade juncture, the focus is on the "world," after which point they move into specific perspectives on certain continents.

Commissioner Thompson indicated a question about the scoring issue associated with one aspect of the rubric.

Kevin Klein answered that not a lot of weight was placed on the textbook but rather on the NYS standards.

Commissioner Thompson asked about why there was even a final process given how broad the spread of scores were on the Science text book.

Mr. Chan indicated that he followed a process, which confirmed the preliminary results.

Commissioner Bowers moved to forward the resolutions for both textbooks to the Board for consideration at its June Business Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Thompson. Adopted 2-0 with Commissioner Brown absent.

Commissioner Bowers departed the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

#### Return to ELA results

Ms. Cianca continued her presentation with Commissioner Thompson.

#### Textbook Recommendation in Response to BOE Concerns

Commissioner Thompson asked about the textbook update and specifically about the cost of the textbook clerk.

Ms. Dyce indicated that we would find out the cost after determining if the person is part time or full time. She stated the Administration would provide the cost information.

Commissioner Thompson asked about the scope of benchmarking and whether it would include our own schools. Is the proposal before the Board predicated upon best practices?

Ms. Dyce indicated the scope would include district schools.

Commissioner Thompson asked about the extent to which various procedures would be evaluated such as fees, etc.

Ms. indicated in the positive – those would all be considered.

Commissioner Thompson asked about whether or not the cost of one text for every student was as costly as we had anticipated.

Ms. Holloway answered that the exorbitant cost was associated with replacement costs for existing textbooks and not acquiring new textbooks.

Ms. Cianca went on to say that it is important to make parents aware of sign out procedures and of the textbooks that are available.

Commissioner Thompson stated that we need to revisit the discussion of providing current textbooks for each student.

Ms. Jarzyniecki highlighted the fact that Social Studies will be on line.

Ms. Rohring noted that social studies texts adopted by the Board in the past year or so have been available online as well and inquired as to whether or not other subjects were going to follow? Whether or not this would be a new requirement in considering texts?

Ms. Cianca indicated that social studies is one of the only courses in which other references are important but has been reliant on one textbook, unlike English and math.

Meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

**Action Items:**

- Follow up discussion on whether to provide copy of all current textbooks to students, not just new adoptions – per BOE discussions during budget process.
- Follow up on Diversity Initiative plan and anticipated costs – provide additional information to committee.