

**ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Policy Review and Development Committee Meeting**

**September 17, 2015**

**MINUTES**

**Attending**

Commissioners – Commissioner Willa Powell (Chair), Commissioner Jose Cruz, and Commissioner Melisza Campos

District Staff – Edwin Lopez-Soto (General Counsel and District Liaison), Suzanne Wheatcraft (Director of School Environmental Safety), and Brendan Gallivan (Executive Director of English Language Learner and Languages Other Than English)

Board Staff – Mia Johnson

Commissioner Powell called the meeting to order at 6:03PM and made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Campos seconded.

**I. Review Minutes of June 11, 2015 Policy Committee Meeting**

Motion by Commissioner Powell to approve the minutes of June 11, 2015 of the Policy Committee Meetings. Adopted 3-0.

**II. Presentation of the Deliverables/Responses**

All three policy report deliverables on the agenda were not to be presented. Chief of Schools Keith Babuszak was not able to attend. The Policy 4314.2: School to Work Transition Initiative Policy will be presented at the next Policy Committee meeting.

Commissioner Powell asked for the presentation of Policy 4326: Instruction of Limited-English Proficient Students (LEP); Regulation from Executive Director of English Language Learner (ELL) and Languages Other Than English (LOTE) Brendan Gallivan to highlight pertinent information of the written report in particularly in the applicability of the policy, anything that needs to be changed, anything that should be updated in the policy, or any administrative practice that needs to substantially change in order to comply with the policy.

Mr. Gallivan described that 90% of the changes are changes in language with the addition of two languages and two regulations in the existing Board policy. The remaining of the policy with minor edits reads fine. Mr. Gallivan provided context to the regulations being written and this document was submitted to the State. It described the variety and scope services offered in the Rochester City School District, current description of the ELL population, glossary and terms/language being used, and the broad and sweeping mandates which are impacting the program and instruction in a positive way. He reported that the State mandates, research, and best practices are in a great conflict, but they are broad and

sweeping and prior to this year, when many of the mandates had to be fully enacted, the District has already been enacting with a majority of the students meeting the mandates. Long-term ELL were not receiving the required services and the year before last 650 students were folded into receiving the services they ought to have been receiving. He stated that research based practice states that ELL strategies are provided through rich content because students must learn English and gain the content in order to graduate.

Commissioner Campos asked Mr. Gallivan what is the vision for his Department. Mr. Gallivan responded that no matter who the student is, every student must meet the high standards of English Language Arts. He recited the mantra “all means all” describing that all children are academic language learners and in order to be the most proficient specific language learners, they must be in circumstances that provide an engaging environment and integrated form of instruction like co-teaching.

Commissioner Campos asked Mr. Gallivan what is the department’s clear vision statement. Mr. Gallivan responded that all teachers are teachers for all students. He described that in the co-teaching classroom that the content teacher understands the content as well as language acquisition. The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher must not only be steeped in strategies for language acquisition, but a content area as well because rich language occurs through meaningful, purposeful content.

Commissioner Campos stated that there are a lot of changes in the mandates and proposed that this goes to the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee. She asked that if there has been an increase in funding based on the changes in the mandates. Mr. Gallivan stated that the state did not increase funding, but the Department is trying to maximize its potential by reviewing the type of professional development offered in both content and ESOL strategies. Mr. Gallivan stated that his department’s professional developments are funded by Title III money and anticipates half the funding next year compared to last year. The reduction is due to flat rate growth in the immigrant population as measured by the State. He stated that this will not continue because the ELL rate is increasing. Commissioner Powell asked how does a flat rate population result in slashing of the aid in half. Mr. Gallivan stated that the State uses a matrix and formula. He stated that there will be an influx of immigrant students next year and the department will not be in its current situation in the near future.

Commissioner Campos stated that the ELLs, especially the Latinos, are doing a good job at Rochester International Academy and great things are happening at Monroe High School this year. Commissioner Campos then asked what is needed to do better because we do our community such an injustice with the constant leadership changes. Mr. Gallivan responded that he has had his third Director of Bilingual Education in 2 years and ten months. Mr. Gallivan has tried to bring clarity and expectations to the home Spanish language arts block as well as what the day looks like in a well-defined bilingual program. Mr. Gallivan stated that what is needed is a coherency of the program, support of materials, and best possible teachers – recruitment and hiring practices, and professional development to sustain teachers. Commissioner Campos responded she has heard that same answer ever since she started eight years ago. Commissioner Powell asked what influence does he, in his role, have in the hiring practices of teachers and if there a limited pool of teachers. Mr. Gallivan responded that there are extreme shortage areas and as a District, we can hire on a different

timeline and other practical and systemic changes that can be done. General Counsel Edwin Lopez-Soto described that that districts across the nation have high shortages in bilingual teachers and the District loses potential teachers based on incentives offered by other districts. Mr. Gallivan also described how it is also the timing of hiring teachers because they are looking in April and hiring occurs in August. Mr. Gallivan described his department has presented and established relationships with the University of Rochester, Nazareth College, and SUNY Geneseo to create a pipeline directly from their programs into the schools, and getting pre-certified teachers into schools to work with students due to the shortage. He expressed the need to create a mutually productive relationship with the colleges. He described how Nazareth College has taken great strides to understand what the profile of the teacher is needed in the classroom and the Cindy McPhail, Director of TESOL Certifications Programs and Bilingual Extension Program at Nazareth College, has co-taught at Monroe High School understanding what the profile of the students are in order to impact their program and deliver teachers that meet the needs of children. Mr. Gallivan stated that he has done interviews at the University of Rochester and Nazareth College for the past two weeks. He requested a need and desire for teachers to be dually certified in a content area and ESOL, as this is the type of teacher the District is looking for and makes a teacher more employable. The department is trying to be creative in its recruitment approach.

Commissioner Campos asked Mr. Gallivan if his department is paying attention to the work being done at East High School and how can we leverage the great work they are doing. Mr. Gallivan responded that many of the initiative that are occurring at East High School began prior to the University of Rochester arrived and a lot of it is continuation. He contended that we should yield results if professional development that is directly related to program offerings is mandated, hire well, and hold teachers accountable for the learning and the application of student learning. He described the challenge of getting teachers to attend the great professional development offered. He described the English Language Arts initiative called Project Chris that teaches teachers how to scaffold content and he spoke to the Brenna Ferrell, the Director of the English Language Arts department, on “ELL-ifying” it and giving it a bilingual strand to maximize the audience. The English Language Arts and the ELL departments have done webinars and professional developments in the past. He stated that NWEA showed more growth among ELL students compared to their general education peers.

Commissioner Campos commented that she reviewed the mandate’s family and parents as partners component, but does not see this done in the District. She stated that there was not a translator at last month’s Board business meeting and that it took over a year to get headphones to get parents involved in the District. The District is not friendly to Latino parents. Parent Connect was not in Spanish and no one knew if it was and now it is in Spanish. Language issues and barriers get brought up and then something is done; however, as a District, what do we need in order to make things better for our Latino parents. She questioned if it is not a priority. Mr. Gallivan stated that the District can contact the ELL Department to communicate to parents in other languages.

Commissioner Cruz stated that there is a need to have a Latino staff who is more aware of things as an everyday issue and there is not diverse, Latino staff who are at levels to make those decisions and remind staff that Latinos are out there for systems like Parent Connect in Spanish. Mr. Lopez-Soto stated that Parent Connect is now in Spanish, but there is a low

use of Parent Connect among parents in both English and Spanish. Commissioner Cruz responded that using the premise that there is a low use of Parent Connect, then Parent Connect should be shut down. He stated that Latino parents are seen as an afterthought and if they are not using the Parent Connect system, then they cannot have it. Commissioner Powell stated that if Parent Connect is not in Spanish, then why would Spanish speaking parents use it. Commissioner Cruz stated that it is an afterthought because there are not people around the table that are continually thinking about issues affecting and impacting Latino parents and students. Commissioner Campos described the recent example of parents at School #9 receiving a letter about the closing in English only. Mr. Lopez-Soto responded that when that correspondence went out, he said that it should be written in Spanish and he is currently working with the Special Education department. He stated that the policy and mandates require that letters and notices have to be translated yet they still remain in English only. There was a lawsuit in 1996 and after, the translation was being done in the Special Education department. Commissioner Powell stated that there is an underrepresentation of a non-English population at the cabinet level and the underrepresentation of a parent constituency overall at the cabinet level.

Commissioner Powell stated that the best ambassadors for the programs are the teachers and the teachers can discuss Parent Connect with the parents. Mr. Gallivan stated that the teacher input data associated with Parent Connect is not the greatest tool and the information is inconsistent. Commissioner Powell stated that teachers who use it more are more likely to promote it among the parents and there should be a better following with that teacher.

Commissioner Cruz described that that the issue of English Language Arts and Bilingual program and teaching English to children dates to 1971 and in some cases further to the late 1960s. The broader issue is what approach will work with Latino students and there are some districts on the west coast who have done phenomenal work. Mr. Gallivan stated the need to recognize that within the bilingual program there are many diverse subgroups. Commissioner Cruz responded that there is not broad stroke approach to educating bilingual children. He questioned how can we create a program that address the students' needs instead of spending a resources creating programs to fit students in and finding that it does not work. Commissioner Cruz inquired if it was possible to have a prescriptive program for children that specifically meets that particular child's needs. It is difficulty to create change unless it is on the specific child level because currently there are a lot of general programs with a lot of sub-groups and types of students. He commended the work of Mr. Gallivan and his department while recognizing that there are new mandates and a need for a reallocation of funding in order to implement such programs. Mr. Gallivan stated that at Monroe High School there are sub-groups that are off the chart smart, already know English, read at a second grade level in their native language, and not testing out of their English language services and referred to as long-term English Language Learners and been in the program for more than 6 years. He acknowledged that there is good work occurring in the schools, but there is still a lot to do.

Commissioner Powell asked in regards to the changes in policy and regulations to define the acronym at the beginning. She questioned the language change in the regulation from "in English or when necessary" to "where possible" because her concern that the language is not

defined. Mr. Gallivan stated that the District is mandated to do it, but there may not be an interpreter in a particular dialect in a language. Commissioner Powell suggested adding a footnote to expound upon and define the term to ensure people are acting. Commissioner Cruz suggested that the condition be removed. Commissioner Powell stated that regulations are meant for the implementer, but what happens if not provided funding for the translator. Mr. Gallivan stated that Monroe County has to have two interpreters for certain languages and at Edison High School and East High School, during state testing, there were centralized interpretation services for the students to maximize the small number of interpreters. Commissioner Powell suggested that she and Mr. Gallivan meet after he has reacted to the suggestions of defining an acronym and the language changes in order to work on updating the policy next month.

Commissioner Cruz asked how the department is utilizing Dr. Donna Harris, an independent consultant, on the Latino initiative. Mr. Gallivan stated that Dr. Harris's expertise is in research and the department has asked Dr. Harris to research what career pathways are chosen by Latino students and getting to know the schools and programs. He expressed that he would like to strengthen the bilingual programs by having students graduate and returning as future teachers. Commissioner Cruz stated that the work of Dr. Harris and the Latino initiative updates needs to be an agenda committee item. Commissioner Cruz stated that the growing our own idea comes up every year, but a commitment to doing it never occurs. He explained that there is great talent in the classrooms with the potential to be great teachers, but yet we are not taking advantage of it and creating such an opportunity as the budget season arrives as this could be a long term solution and a Board initiative.

Commissioner Powell asked for the presentation on Policy 7010: Lead Safe Schools from Suzanne Wheatcraft, Director of School Environmental Safety. Commissioner Powell stated that she remembers when this policy formed when the paint was falling off the ceiling in a closet. Ms. Wheatcraft responded that since 2010 schools from all over the country asks the District for copies of the policy because the District was a very early adopter and worked with the local Lead Safe Coalition. The documents she presented on outlined what the Facilities Department is required to do: training for custodial and maintenance staff as a part of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mandates; contracts for any type of renovations required proof that their employees follow the same work practices to minimize and prevent lead exposure; partner with and have a representative on the the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning Coalition; the custodial staff conducts surveys of the buildings and keep walls painted to prevent paint peeling; and education of the parents of their rights to take care of the potential of exposure outside of school. Ms. Wheatcraft stated that she is not recommending any changes to the policy.

### **III. Re-Adoption of the Policy Manual and Policy Deliverables/Recommendations**

Commissioner Powell described that her goal for this committee is to go through the entire policy manual focusing on policies that have deliverables and making sure the committee is asking the right questions for the report. There has been variability in the type reports provided by District staff and the electronic analysis form can serve as an executive summary. She expressed that she would like consistency in what is being asked because the

mandate for reporting has varied widely. She also expressed that she would like all the policies available online because there are only a select number available online. Commissioner Powell will be working with Board Staff Mia Johnson during the day to work on this goal and the work will be brought back to the committee for approvals. Commissioner Powell's primary goal is to re-certify the entire policy manual in one Board vote as oppose to addressing policies piecemeal. She stated that when policies are addressed piecemeal, the focus is on policies that are state mandated and never get the policies created by the Board to determine if they are necessary or not.

Commissioner Cruz stated there has been many changes on the state and federal level so the policy manual becomes obsolete quickly. Commissioner Powell responded that with the mandated policy, the Board tries to refer to the law and not re-state it because the law changes and must rely upon Administration to keep abreast to those changes.

The committee agreed.

#### **IV. Follow-up/Action Item: Policy 5153 Parent Preference/Managed Choice – Next Steps Establishing a committee of stakeholders**

Commissioner Powell asked the committee if they have submitted suggestions and committee member names to put on the committee. She also stated that she will solicit the Administration for staff with spare time to participate. Commissioner Campos suggested having a brief summary of what the anticipated commitment to give to people so they know what they are committing to. Commissioner Powell suggested Shirley Thompson as a former Board member to be on the committee. Commissioner Powell asked about how much time would this committee need indicating that it could vary based on the views of the committee. Commissioner Cruz suggested phasing in the committee– Phase #1 views where is the District today and Phase #2 views where do we need to go and what are the alternatives. He stated that with such a strategy a person does not have to commit for a really long time, but for a portion of it.

Commissioner Powell expressed concern about school closings since this policy and how does that effect the balance of the zone, available seats in the zone, and the transportation issue. Commissioner Powell will meet with Ms. Johnson to discuss and compose the type data needed, i.e. number of people who received first, second, or third choices and a review of previous reports. Commissioner Cruz stated that it is important to look at the issue of neighborhood schools. Commissioner Powell described how during the campaign that neighborhood schools became a buzz word but lacked a definition. She described how important it is to figure out why people are not choosing the neighborhood school but opting to send their children to the local charter schools or transporting them to a school outside of the neighborhood. Commissioner Cruz described the need to re-define the term neighborhood school based on the quadrant so one can have several options within the neighborhoods. He described the current definition of neighborhood schools as schools where the parents can walk their children to school. He questioned what happens when there is not enough neighborhood schools to meet the high concentration of people i.e. in the northeast. Commissioner Powell stated that before the managed choice policy, the District

decided what children to bus and where, but it was a group of children from the same neighborhood to the same school. She questioned what is giving the parent greater autonomy: choosing their children's schools or interfacing with their neighbors when they make that decision. She questioned if the concept of the institution making the decision is not a bad premise. Commissioner Powell stated that the policy is outdated as schools continue to close. Commissioner Cruz described how badly school closings effected the northeast quadrant.

**V. Follow-up/Action Item: Contact Audit Committee regarding Parent Liaisons and Home School Assistants have their roles and functions been reviewed and compared to their official job descriptions.**

The committee decided to refer this to the Excellence in Student Achievement Committee.

**VI. Follow-up/Action Item: Analysis of Parent Connect to convert it from English to Spanish**

The committee decided that this is a closed item because the Parent Connect system has added a module to convert it to Spanish.

**Motion** by Commissioner Powell to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Campos. **Adopted 3-0.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:21PM.