

**Rochester Board of Education**  
**Policy Committee**  
**September 15, 2011**  
**5:30PM**

**Attendance:** Commissioner Cruz (Chair) and Commissioners Powell and Elliott (arrived 5:40PM). Commissioner Campos absent. Parent Representative: Victoria Robertson. District staff: Charles Johnson, General Counsel; Cara Briggs, Attorney with Law Dept.; Vicki Ramos, Director of Student Placement; Luis Colon, Office of Student Placement; Jeanette Silvers, Chief of the Office of Accountability; and Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family Services. Board staff: Ms. Debra Flanagan.

Commissioner Cruz convened the meeting at 5:32PM.

**I. Presentation about Student Placement**

Vicki Ramos provided an overview of the student placement process, noting that a total of 1346 students have been added to the District's enrollment since July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Victoria Robertson questioned why school choice cannot be guaranteed to families new to the District, and cited this as a major deterrent to middle-class families moving into the City.

Commissioner Powell pointed out that the data contained in the handout indicate that most schools' capacity is not maximized through school choice. Ms. Ramos replied that parents are offered five choices for elementary school and eight choices of secondary schools. She explained that the lottery fills the projected number of seats with those who selected the school as their first choice, then as their second choice and finally as their third choice. Ms. Ramos noted that for the kindergarten lottery, all projected seats are filled with the first three choices designated by parents. At the secondary level, projected seats are filled from the eight choices indicated by parents.

Commissioner Powell pointed out that the critical factor in school choice is participation in the lottery. She expressed concern about inequities arising from failure to guarantee school choice to one particular segment of the population (i.e. families new to the District).

Ms. Robertson commented that families may move into the District in the summer or early in the school year, after the lottery deadline. Ms. Ramos stated that the wait lists for schools are maintained for one year to enable these families to obtain their school of choice when an opening becomes available. Ms. Robertson pointed out that families moving into the District after the lottery deadline would be placed last on the wait list for their school of choice. Ms. Ramos confirmed that families are placed on the wait list for a school in the order in which the request was made. Ms. Robertson asked how many families move into the half-mile catchment area of popular schools after the lottery deadline, and the number on the wait list for these schools compared to the number of openings that arise during the course of the school year.

**Action Item: Ms. Ramos will provide information to the Policy Committee as to the school catchment areas into which new families have moved after the lottery deadline, and a comparison of the number on the wait list to the number of openings that become available during the school year.**

## **II. Review and Approval of August 18, 2011 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Motion** by Commissioner Powell to approve the minutes of the August 18, 2011 Policy Committee meeting. **Adopted 2-0, with concurrence of the parent representative.**

## **III. Report of the status of the Parent Involvement Policy and Regulation**

Dorothy Evans-Flaherty presented the timeframe for developing the Parent Involvement policy and regulation over the past year, stating that she has requested feedback from the Executive Committee of the School-Based Planning Teams, collective bargaining units, and the Parent Council by September 26th.

Commissioner Powell noted that the regulation does not provide sufficient detail in terms of the way in which the Parent Council will be governed (i.e. through developing and approving their own bylaws, or through some other mechanism). She suggested that the regulation provide a specific timeframe for the Parent Council to meet with the Superintendent, rather than “periodically”.

Ms. Robertson requested examples from other districts in terms of the way in which the national standards for parent involvement are implemented, and suggested that the regulation include specific outcome measures to evaluate the efficacy of RCSD parent involvement efforts.

Commissioner Elliott suggested that the Parent Council meet with the Board of Education at least twice per year to address concerns. She also inquired whether the District has measured the impact of parent involvement on student achievement, and requested that this research be presented to the Policy Committee.

**Action Item: Ms. Evans-Flaherty will revise the parent involvement regulation to provide greater detail regarding governance of the Parent Council and the timeframe for the Parent Council to meet with the Superintendent.**

**Ms. Evans-Flaherty will also present research findings to the Policy Committee regarding the impact of parent involvement on student achievement, and examples of the way in which other districts evaluate the effectiveness of parent involvement efforts based on the national standards.**

## **IV. Input received from Youth Health Forum**

Gladys Pedraza Burgos reported that 82 students (current high school students and recent graduates up to age 21) and 49 adults attended the Youth Health Forum last night. She stated that a staff member from AIDS Care gave a presentation of statistical data regarding teen pregnancy, STD and HIV infection. She noted that a wide range of views were represented in the students’ small group discussions, with comments favoring abstinence and those favoring more extensive sex education and making condoms available in nurses’ offices in schools. Ms. Pedraza Burgos stated that the next step will be for the Parent Council to host a similar forum for RCSD parents of high school students to provide input on these issues.

Commissioner Cruz remarked that the students’ efforts in organizing and participating in the Forum, and considering the issues were quite impressive.

Commissioner Elliott reported receiving comments out of concern for the length of time involved in developing a policy on this issue.

Commissioner Cruz emphasized the importance of allowing sufficient time to obtain input from all affected parties to ensure a sound basis for the policy that is developed.

#### **V. Proposed Employee Residency Policy**

Commissioner Elliott presented a draft policy to require that employees hired after a specified date be required to reside in the District. She stated that this policy would add to the City's tax rolls and lead to employees' children attending District schools, which would increase the investment of staff in the District.

Commissioner Powell inquired whether other school districts have a similar policy, which could be used as a model in developing a policy here.

**Action Item: Examples of employee residency policies from other school districts will be presented to the Policy Committee.**

#### **VI. Discuss Proposed Amendment to Transportation Policy (8400)**

Commissioner Elliott presented an amendment to Transportation policy to eliminate the limit on eligibility for transportation services to 1.5 miles from a student's residence to school. She explained that this proposal arises out of concern for children's safety, noting that walking to school in some neighborhoods would involve potential exposure to drug abuse, prostitution, and violence. She stated that she would like to see this proposed amendment adopted by December, for implementation in the 2011-12 school year.

Commissioner Cruz suggested meeting with Jerome Underwood to discuss the implications of the amendment and the timeframe for implementation.

**Action Item: Commissioner Elliott and Commissioner Cruz are to meet with Jerome Underwood, Facilities Director, to discuss the impact of the proposed amendment to Transportation policy.**

#### **VII. Special Education Mandates**

Chuck Johnson reported that policies must be updated to incorporate legal mandates regarding Special Education. He asserted that development of regulations to implement these policies is particularly crucial in ensuring consistency in practice throughout the District. Mr. Johnson stated that proposed policies will be drafted to present in the November Policy Committee meeting, and the regulations will be formulated between December 2011 and February 2012 to present to the Policy Committee. He stated that the primary focus will be on: independent evaluations, least restrictive environments for Special Education students, and parent involvement for parents of students with disabilities.

Commissioner Elliott described accompanying a parent to a meeting of the Committee on Special Education (CSE), which consisted of nine staff members and one parent representative. She stated that the CSE members dismissed all of the parent's concerns regarding the way in which their child's program was being administered. She emphasized the importance of respecting parents and their knowledge of

their own child, asserting that the parent should have the ultimate decision regarding their child's placement and services.

Commissioner Cruz noted additional concerns to include in Special Education discussions: Latino children and placement; parent involvement; and the over-representation of African American males in Special Education. He stated that he would also like to get input from parent representatives and external organizations.

Commissioner Powell stated that she would like the regulations to provide legitimate parameters in terms of the school options available to parents of children with disabilities. She also urged that transportation issues be addressed because of the impact on the options available to these students.

**Motion** by Commissioner Powell to adjourn. **Adopted 2-0, with concurrence of parent representative.**

Meeting adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

**Next Policy Committee Meeting: November 10th at 5:30PM**