



Board of Education Meeting  
October 27, 2015

2015-2016 Board of Education  
Katy Keohane Glassberg, President · Chris Repetto, Vice President  
Karen Belanger·Blake Jines·Storey·Nancy Pasquale· Kelly Smith Powers·Nicole Weber

## A Summary of the 10/27/15 Rye City School District Board of Education Meeting

### **Welcome to the Public**

Board of Education President Katy Keohane Glassberg welcomed members of the public and stated that on the agenda for the evening's meeting was to present for discussion the revised dress code policy and the District's assessment data.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Dr. Frank Alvarez reported that he, Ms. Glassberg and Ms. Pasquale attended the NYSSBA convention in New York last week. One session included a discussion with the new Commissioner of Education MaryEllen Elia. Commissioner Elia stated SED is re-visiting the Common Core standards and is seeking input from educational professionals, teachers and administrators via a survey that will be live soon and will collect responses for the next several weeks.

Dr. Alvarez said the RTA, Board and Administration all agree it is important to provide feedback as a District, with the goal being 100% District participation. To facilitate that, the District will use one of its "Curriculum Mondays" – two-hour sessions held once per month – for teachers to discuss the standards and take the State Education Department survey. He noted this is the first time the state has asked us to "be at the table" and we should be there.

Dr. Alvarez reported the District has submitted the Smart Bond application, and invited Ms. O'Connor to provide a report. Ms. O'Connor stated that the application was due on October 16<sup>th</sup>, but the District was able to submit a little early. The application included two pieces – a technology survey outlining where the District stands today and an investment piece about how Rye will use the funds. The application was submitted to BOCES for review prior to sending it to the State, as required. The State has recommended one revision necessary on the technology portion and then the revision will be submitted to the State portal for revision submission, which is only open certain days and times. The District did submit the facilities planning and

have been assigned project numbers, so is now waiting on complete approval from the State.

Dr. Alvarez reported two members of the RCSD community were recently inducted into the Westchester County Sports Hall of Fame: Mary Henwood, a beloved member of the Athletics Department, for her outstanding basketball record in high school and college as well as her lengthy coaching career, and Greg Draddy, an alumnus of the RCSD who was All-State in football and basketball.

He congratulated the Rye Garnets football team on another post-season win. Sectional semi-finals are coming up, followed by two regional games, all leading to the possibility of going to Syracuse for the finals.

He note that last week's *Rye Record* had a succinct and very well done article on our new math pathways, so anyone who has was not able to attend a Board of Education meeting to learn about the pathways should pick up the paper and read about it there.

He congratulated Dr. Wyks on receiving approval on the APPR waiver from the state that day. The District will need to submit a new APPR plan or an additional waiver request to the state by March.

Ms. Glassberg pointed out two additional points that came out of the NYSSBA convention. The first is that the standardized tests will be shorter in duration this spring. The second is that actual teachers will be vetting the test questions. The tests from last spring were not vetted by teachers and were lengthy.

## **Presentations/Discussions**

### **Policy 5311.5 Student Dress Code**

Ms. Glassberg began by stating that setting policy is one of the major jobs of the Board of Education and noted the policy committee works very hard. The committee is comprised of committee head Karen Belanger, Nancy Pasquale, Blake Jines-Storey, Dr. Wyks and Dr. Alvarez. Ms. Glassberg noted as per procedure, changes to policy come before the Board three times: once for presentation, once for discussion and finally for adoption. She noted the dress code revision is at the discussion stage. She stated the committee works all year long and meets more than once per month, but does not meet over the summer – in July and August. When questions about revisions to the dress code policy originally came up in June, it was put on the agenda for September.

Ms. Belanger stated that the aim of policy revision is two-fold. The dress code policy has been in place since 1996 and is due for review. The policy is part of the District Code of Conduct, which the District is required to have by

law. She noted the District is also required by law to have a code of conduct. Currently, an even older version of the dress code exists in the Code of Conduct containing a wider range of policies – approximately 20 of them. The Policy Committee’s goal is to review all policies this year and put them into a new Code of Conduct after a public hearing. She noted more districts are moving towards adding to the Code of Conduct and not having separate policies.

Ms. Belanger read out the proposed revised dress code policy. Please click [here](#) to read the policy. She noted the lengthy list of protected classes comes from DASA (the Dignity for All Students Act) and is included on the recommendation of the District’s lawyers.

Ms. Glassberg stated she thought it was a great idea to streamline the policies and the Code of Conduct and this would eliminate the confusion that sometimes arises when the language differs between the policy and the Code of Conduct. She asked members of the public to come to the podium:

Rachel Belanger of 4 George Langeloh Court, came to the podium to request hats be allowed to be worn by students.

Kerri Sack of 20 Thorne Place came to the podium to ask for a clarification. Currently there is a Middle School handbook, a Code of Conduct and a policy. Which will take precedence?

Ms. Belanger responded that it is the intent that the student policy will go in to the Code of Conduct, and she would expect the Middle School handbook would mirror that language. She stated DASA requires us to include any age-appropriate rules of conduct, so the administrators at each school will develop those for the various school levels.

Ms. Sack stated she did not like the phrase in the proposed new policy “not interfere with the learning process.”

Kristen Hoft Rafa of 13 Park Street came to the podium to ask how the policy would be implemented and who has a say in how it is implemented.

Ms. Belanger replied that, as a governing body, the Board of Education sets the policies, but doesn’t implement them. Dr. Alvarez and the administration do the implementing. She noted the policy states the building principal and his/her designees are responsible for enforcing the dress code.

Caroline Gadaleta of 11 Thorne Place stated she seconded Ms. Sack’s objection to the phrase about clothing not interfering in the learning process. She enquired as to how the Board would proceed with enforcement.

Lee Sandford of 25 Hillside Place came to the podium and stated she also has a problem with the current policy language, given her belief that the enforcement was what was interfering with the learning process for girls.

Katherine Olsen of 5 Hunter Lane came to the podium to inquire about the appropriateness of lace garments with a tank top underneath. She stated she would like to see something about that memorialized in the Code of Conduct.

Mr. Jines-Storey said the committee worked very hard on the issue. They discussed the concept of clothing being distracting and agreed it should not be part of the policy. However, interfering with the learning process is just that, and they would assume such interference would be dealt with within the Code of Conduct. The Board will encourage the administration to implement the policy in an appropriate manner, but at issue is judgment regarding wearing appropriate attire for any given situation.

Alyson Walsh of 2 Dalphin Drive came to the podium to state she agreed responsibility should lie with parents and children. From a practical standpoint, she noted it is hard to find long shorts. She noted at back to school night she saw girls wearing leggings and thought they must have been distracted by being hot on a warm night.

Mr. Repetto stated that it is hard to define in a policy what is appropriate. The policy should serve as a basis for more open conversation and more open dialogue between parents, administrators and students. He stated that authority must rest with someone and the implementation piece is always going to be hard. He noted policy details bring argument, and the immediate step should be to get something on paper wherein we all agree appropriateness matters.

Ms. Belanger noted the committee have been immersed in the subject and think the important point is that students should dress appropriately for the situation. The dress code is a way to clarify appropriateness for students. She explained the committee considered an actual list of what is/is not permissible but, in the end, resolved not to include one.

Ms. Glassberg stated implementation should be in the hands of reasonable, well-meaning administrators who understand the goal is to have kids at school and prepared to learn.

Some discussion followed, and, after a suggestion by Ms. Smith-Powers, a decision was made to replace "and does not interfere with the learning process" with the more positive "maintains an environment that promotes learning success."

Ms. Hoft Rafa came to the podium to state she understood, on occasion, teachers, rather than administrators, had requested students leave the classroom for dress code violations.

Ms. Belanger responded the policy states the authority will be with the building principal, but all personnel are tasked with guiding students about appropriate attire.

Ms. Hoft Rafa inquired how this would be communicated to all personnel.

Dr. Alvarez responded that when the Board creates a new policy, the District will take time at administrative meetings to look closely at it. He noted that when the administration asks teachers to be involved in a policy, the administration will have presentations about it and will work through scenarios during professional development days or Superintendent's Conference Days. He stated he didn't think sole authority should rest with teachers; that teachers should report dress code infractions to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Dr. Alvarez stated dress code is really not a major problem for this District: "for most students, for most families, this is not an issue." He stated he does not want teachers or principals spending time measuring hemlines. He believes the proposed policy establishes rules but has some flexibility.

Ms. Glassberg stated that there are times during the school year when our children are being educated in non-air-conditioned classrooms. She said if students come to take a test in mid-June and it's 96 or 98 degrees outside, what you wear and what is appropriate then is very different from what you wear in December. She believes it's a matter of what is appropriate given the conditions, and that the proposed policy allows for reasonableness.

Discussion over the policy regarding hats followed. Ms. Glassberg clarified that the policy currently states that hats are not allowed in classrooms, so under the current policy, they would be allowed in the hallways and other areas of the school.

Ann Edwards, Middle School Principal, noted the ban on hats in classrooms came from the Excellence Team, not from the administration. At the time, teachers felt kids were hiding behind the brims. She stated she currently doesn't see many students wearing hats.

Pat Taylor stated that in elementary, Middle and High schools, the practice of allowing hats in class is different. She noted in the High School, hats are allowed. Some teachers ask students to take them off in class if they can't see a student's eyes to tell if they are paying attention. In general, she finds fewer and fewer students are wearing them.

After some discussion, the Board concluded that the policy should be left as it currently stands, wherein students are asked to take off hats in class, but may wear them elsewhere in school.

## **2015 District Assessment Data**

Dr. Betty Ann Wyks came before the Board to present the 2015 Assessment Data. Please link to the presentation [here](#).

Dr. Wyks began by saying that individual student testing results were distributed to parents in September. The District has since completed an analysis of the data and can now have a discussion about how our students performed. Dr. Wyks noted results towards upward movement within testing bands. She noted the State's standardized tests were changed two years ago to align to the Common Core, and are set to be changed again – this time they are being moved to a new company. She noted that the “ground rules keep changing on us,” but the District has been committed to Common Core and to aligning our curriculum to the Common Core. She stated the District does think the curriculum changes are having a long-term positive effect, promoting a deeper understanding of the curricular concepts presented.

Dr. Wyks noted the tests are a snapshot of student achievement as measured by state testing. The testing covers grades 3-8 in ELA and Math Grades 4 and 8 in Science, Regents (grades 8-12), and Advanced Placement (AP) courses (grades 10-12) and SATs.

Dr. Wyks stated the focus should be on whether our students are moving up levels – progressing along a continuum. Dr. Wyks said in the past, the District would examine the reports comparing grade level to grade level; now we compare students to themselves over time. She believes this helps shape discussion about an instructional program that supports achievement and leads to a plan to increase achievement, student-by-student, across all levels.

[For a break-down of the test scores, please see the [presentation](#)]

### **District ELA Scores**

Dr. Wyks noted that Rye's proficiency level is 60.9% versus the overall state average of 31.3%. Dr. Wyks thinks our Readers Workshop model will garner results in our ELA tests and noted the teachers had their initial training just last year. Dr. Wyks noted the District's overall opt-out rates were 7% in ELA and 8% in Math.

Dr. Wyks stated the opt-outs numbers “really threw us a curveball this year.” She noted it makes it very difficult to compare ourselves to other districts whose opt-out rates were different from our own and are not available by grade. She stated the State did tell us how they thought our opt-out students

would have performed based on their performance last year, but the state didn't tell us their grade level, making the information essentially useless.

Ms. Glassberg asked if AIS (Academic Intervention Services) cut-offs for the ELA had changed. Dr. Wyks replied that the levels were consistent with last year.

The AIS cut offs for ELA are as follows:

3rd grade – 299

4th grade – 296

5th and 6th grade – 297

7th grade - 301

Dr. Wyks presented on the following test results:

ELA Grade 3, ELA Grade 4, ELA Grade 5, ELA Grade 6, ELA Grade 7, ELA Grade 8

Dr. Wyks noted our District's overall ELA rank is in the top decile of districts statewide, although she is leery of putting much confidence in our ranking versus other districts due to the number of opt-outs and varying class sizes.

A member of the audience asked how the data is used in practice. Do teachers see the data?

Dr. Wyks responded that the teachers have looked at the data in the presentation, and they receive an item-by-item analysis at the building level. They will be able to see which questions students did well on, and which they didn't. The District will work to analyze if that reflects a poor question, or an actual weakness in our curriculum. She noted that when Common Core came into being, the District was behind in implementing it. Some other Districts implemented a literacy program two years before Rye.

ELA High School English Regents

Dr. Wyks noted that the current version of this test will not exist next year. It will be taken in the 11th grade.

NYS Math 3-8

The AIS cut offs for the Math test have changed. They are as follows:

3<sup>rd</sup> grade – 293

4<sup>th</sup> grade – 284

5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grades – 289

7<sup>th</sup> grade – 290

8<sup>th</sup> grade – 293

Dr. Wyks then presented on the following tests:

Math Grade 3, Math Grade 4, Math Grade 5, Math 6, Math 7,  
Math Grade 8

Dr. Wyks noted that in this final cohort, some students also took the Common Core Algebra Regents this year, so some students took 2-3 tests. Not all districts take the Algebra Regents in grade 8. She noted that all current High Schoolers must take the Common Core Regents to graduate. Based on the new math pathways, in the future, most students will take the Algebra Regents test after 9th grade.

Dr. Wyks summarized by saying Rye typically performs better in Math and noted the District continues to see positive movement. We are 8 percentage points from Chappaqua which she pointed out reflects the scores of a few students.

Integrated Algebra Regents

Only High School students could take this in addition to the Common Core Regents. This was the last year for this exam. Only 51 students sat for it.

Common Core Algebra I Regents 2015

Approximately 935 of the students demonstrated proficiency with a level 3 or 4 score.

Science Grades 4 & 8

There are generally very few opt-outs with these tests. Ms. Belanger noted that students enjoy taking and historically do well on them, because they feel successful and enjoy the demonstration part of the test. Dr. Wyks stated they are required but they don't carry as much weight as the ELA or Math tests, and noted the tests themselves haven't been revised in years. Students who take the Earth Science Regents in 8th grade do not take this test.

Earth Science Regents

These exams are taken by both Middle and High School students with a passing rate of 95%.

Living Environment (Biology) Regents 98% passing rate

Chemistry Regents 86% passing rate

Social Studies Regents

There are two exams that fall under this category – Global History and U.S. History and Government. The District needs to update the curriculum for these classes. New standards are forthcoming for these classes, and we as a District want to get out in front of them, rather than being reactionary.

## AP Test Results

Dr. Wyks noted the District is in the process of revising and updating all our AP courses and providing associated training for staff. The District has also experienced changes in personnel who are teaching the courses. For example, we have three new U.S. History teachers this school year. Other teachers were trained in AP instruction some time ago.

Some discussion followed about the number of students taking AP classes and exams. High School Principal Pat Taylor noted that there were 45 more students in 70 more exams this year. There followed some speculation on the part of Board members that students are taking multiple exams and this may impact scores. Ms. Taylor confirmed that some students take as many as 5 AP exams.

Ms. Belanger noted that there may be larger class sizes in the AP classes. Dr. Wyks stated that the District has an open policy towards students taking AP courses and sitting for AP exams. Ms. Belanger noted that this has always been the case. Ms. Glassberg inquired if we should be looking at AP class sizes more closely.

## SATs

Dr. Wyks noted that the State mean in Writing is 484, and Rye's is 613. The State mean in Reading is 495 and Rye's is 603. The State mean in Math is 511 and Rye's is 602.

Dr. Wyks then presented on how the data will be used by the District at each of the school levels to refine curriculum, identify best practices and discover potential causes of weakness. She outlined the District's upcoming professional development opportunities. She also indicated the District is providing structures for AIS and will be monitoring support programs (ELL, AIS and Special Education) to ensure that consistency remains across the district in these categories). These would form the basis for a separate presentation.

Ms. Pasquale noted the Board has looked at the testing data in its current format for a long time. She stated that at the end of the testing process, the District looks at strategies for improvement. She said she would be interested in seeing a presentation with examples of how the District identifies areas for improvement and how changes are implemented, particularly in light of the fact the District now seeks to "meet each student where they are."

Ms. Glassberg stated the presentation document does not have information about areas of strengths and weaknesses for each grade for each test, and while this is conveyed verbally during the course of the presentation, it is hard for Board members to take notes on those quickly. She would be interested in knowing what the specific action plans are for improvements.

Ms. Glassberg noted constructed response seems to be a systemic problem and an area for renewed effort. She noted the tests in Statistics, U.S. Government, Politics and History are areas where the High School might focus next year. Ms. Taylor responded that Economics and Statistics are sometimes the first AP class experiences for students who have not taken other APs.

Dr. Wyks noted the next four Board meetings will contain curriculum presentations.

### **Communications to the Board**

There were no new communications to the Board to report.

### **Board Actions**

The Board passed policy 5420.1 Immunizations.

Next Regular Meeting  
November 10, 2015  
7:30 p.m.  
Rye Middle School  
Multipurpose Room

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