

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNITY DISTRICT

BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMUNITY MEETING “A Year in Review and Moving Ahead”

Tuesday, February 20, 2018
5:30 P.M.

Wayne County Community College
1001 Fort Street
Detroit, MI 48226

The Community Meeting of the Board of Education of the Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD or District) Board of Education began at 5:33 p.m.

Present at the Meeting:

Dr. Iris Taylor, President
Angelique Peterson-Mayberry, Vice President
Dr. Deborah Hunter-Harvill, Member
Sonya Mays, Treasurer
Misha Stallworth, Secretary

Administration:

Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent

Welcome/Introductions

Dr. Iris Taylor, President, presented the welcome and stated the purpose of the meeting. The President introduced Board Members Vice President Peterson-Mayberry and Curriculum/Academics Chair, Dr. Deborah Hunter-Harvill and Superintendent Nikolai Vitti. Members Sonya Mays, Treasurer and Misha Stallworth, Secretary were introduced as they arrived.

Key Accomplishments

Vice President Peterson-Mayberry discussed key accomplishments of the Board since seated in January 2016. Vice President Peterson-Mayberry shared contact information for herself, the board office and office of the superintendent.

Strategic Plan Update

Superintendent Dr. Nikolai Vitti provided an update on the District’s Strategic Plan and Priorities. Dr. Vitti also briefly discussed the issue of teacher vacancies within the District and the importance of

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNITY DISTRICT

maintaining transparency and professionalism. The floor was open to the audience for questions, comments, and concerns.

Questions, Comments, Concerns and Responses

Questions, Comments, and Concerns

Joyce Jennings directed the following questions to Dr. Vitti and the Board:

- Could the District incur some of the cost and fees associated with the employee application process such as finger printing and transcript requests?
- What is the process for applying to application schools and will those types of schools be expanded?

Superintendent's Response:

- *Ms. Jennings was commended on a great recommendation and stated the District is evaluating the statutory requirement relating to the cost and fees associated with the employment process. The District is considering having a single location for fingerprinting, etc., and waiving the fees linked to the cost based on outsourcing altogether.*
- *This year all 8th grade students will have the opportunity to apply for application schools. The selection process is no longer being done on the school level and is taking a more wholistic view of students not just based on test scores. The District is seeking to open more options beyond the existing examination high schools.*

Questions, Comments, and Concerns

Maria Koliantz, Montessori parent and PTA leader at Maybury, asked Dr. Vitti:

- What is the District's direction for Montessori Schools?
- Dr. Vitti was invited to share his vision for Montessori schools at their next parent meeting on Tuesday, February 27, 2018, at 5:00pm at Palmer Park Preparatory Academy.

Superintendent's Response:

- *The District will review and determine the best strategy for the Montessori program. Options in consideration are for students to remain in their current setting from PK-8th grade or the programs will move to hubs geographically serving all areas and students. There is no intention to discontinue current programs.*
 - *Superintendent would be glad to attend the next parent meeting.*
-

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNITY DISTRICT

Questions, Comments, and Concerns

Helen Moore directed the following questions and concerns to Dr. Vitti:

- Was he aware of the Mayor's intention to take control of the District?
- The administration at Mark Twain have been escorting activist parents out of the school.
- Students at Cass Technical High School were admitted without taking the exam as well as low-performing students being admitted.
- Does the property of King High School belong to the District or the city of Detroit and is the property for sale?
- Absent principal at Frederick Douglass.
- The District should consider hiring a lobbyist for DPSCD.

Superintendent's Response:

Dr. Vitti stated he have attended several community meetings at the invitation of Ms. Moore. He also stated he may not always agree but he listens and have made decisions based on information received from meetings and that Ms. Moore had provided.

Dr. Vitti proceeded to respond to Ms. Moore's questions, comments, and concerns as follows:

- *He is not aware and do not think Mayor Duggan have intentions on taking over the District.*
- *He is aware and currently investigating the issue involving activist parents at Mark Twain being requested to leave the school.*
- *It is true that some students attending Cass as well as Renaissance and King did not take the exam but were admitted through the appeals process. Approximately 200 students were accepted without taking the exam. Dr. Vitti could not substantiate the students grade point averages.*
- *The District owns the King H.S. property. He is unaware of a property sale for King. As it relates to Cass, based on information received the former Financial Manager and the Principal did have discussions regarding options to sell property at Cass. Dr. Vitti have not seen an updated proposal. Several requests for an updated proposal have been made to Olympia but to date have not been received. No District property can be sold unless recommended by the superintendent and receives board approval.*

Questions, Comments, and Concerns

Parent of Priest student had the following concern:

- Safety at Priest due to unlocked doors at the school.

Superintendent's Response:

- *Iranetta Wright, Deputy Superintendent of Schools will visit Priest and investigate the issue. A letter will be forwarded to parents after the break regarding additional safety measures insuring that there is one entry and exit access point.*

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNITY DISTRICT

Questions, Comments, and Concerns

Dr. Dujon Johnson, a full-time professor with impressive credentials including a doctorate degree and who teaches Chinese to students at Dixon school, expressed the following concerns to Dr. Vitti:

- Concerned about only being hired as a substitute teacher.
- Human Resources Department could not provide alternative measures for certification and full-time employment as a teacher.

Superintendent's Response:

- *The District have only hired certified teachers at the request of parents and community.*
- *The District is currently looking into an alternative or provisional certification program based on the focus area of teaching for the fall.*

Vice President Peterson-Mayberry supported the Superintendent's statement that it was the wish of parents and community to only hire certified teachers.

Questions, Comments, and Concerns

Monique Bryant, parent of a student at Frederick Douglass, expressed the following concerns to Dr. Vitti:

- Lack of school leadership that is affecting the climate of the school with staff and students.
- Concerned about the lack of response from Shalonda Buchman, Senior Executive Director, Family & Community Engagement when attempting to complete the process for establishing the Douglass Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Ms. Bryant received a prompt response by Ms. Buchman to initiate the process in October. However, Ms. Buchman did not respond to Ms. Bryant to complete the process. The application for PTA was not completed until Ms. Bryant walked into the department and received assistance from Charldine Bowens who works in the department.
- Would like transparency with Parent Engagement and for the PTA to be a part of the process in selecting new leadership for Douglass.

Superintendent's Response:

- *Douglass does not meet the Superintendent's expectations for a single gender school. The Principal will be retiring. Once the principal retires there will be an opportunity to recruit a leader inside or outside the district who can help build the single gender school to be an example of what a single gender school should represent. Dr. Vitti apologized for the condition of Douglass. Dr. Vitti encouraged parental support in rebuilding the school.*
- *Dr. Vitti informed the audience they do not have to wait for a public meeting or for an issue to reach a crisis state to get his attention. He encouraged the audience to email him their questions and concerns at any time. He will respond and hold staff accountable.*
- *The parents would be a welcomed part of the selection process for new leadership.*

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNITY DISTRICT

Questions, Comments, and Concerns

Chrystal Gardner, Cass Technical High School alumnus, expressed the following concerns regarding Cass:

- Issue with security and open doors at the school. Commended Cass on a successful active shooter drill.
- Mice in the building while the exterminator red book (log) goes unchecked to target areas with issues. Reported rodent issue to Felicia Venable, Senior Executive Director of Operations and was not satisfied with the response.
- Muddy parking lot.
- Better customer service.

Superintendent's Response:

- *Iranetta Wright, Deputy Superintendent of Schools will investigate open doors at the school.*
- *The District is mandated to have a required number of emergency drills with documented results. The District will require better training for active shooters.*
- *Facilities will follow up to ensure protocol for rodents is being followed.*
- *The parking lot for Cass is scheduled to be completed by the fall.*
- *Customer service is important and better job training is a must in the District.*

Vice President Peterson-Mayberry stated customer service is very important and cost nothing. Vice Chair also have first-hand knowledge of rodent problems in schools and have her own concerns regarding disposal of dead rodents.

Questions, Comments, and Concerns

Cre Baker, parent of a special needs student at Cass Technical High School suggested the following:

- Smaller group or one-on-one tutoring as opposed to group sessions.
- Allow students to provide tutoring to other students and receive a stipend or credit.
- Praised son's teacher Mr. Ross for providing excellent support and acknowledging his students.

Superintendent's Response:

- *Superintendent understands the need for individual support for special needs students. The District is looking into alternative after-school or latchkey support programs.*

Questions, Comments, and Concerns

H. Terri Berry, Cass Technical High School Alumnus and Chief Operations Officer of the Triangle Society, stated Cass Technical High School alumni and parents would like to request a meeting to discuss issues pertaining to Cass.

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNITY DISTRICT

Superintendent's Response:

- *A meeting will be forthcoming to address issues and concerns of Cass Technical High School.*

Questions, Comments, and Concerns

Tranyssa Booker, parent of student attending Brenda Scott, expressed the following concerns regarding her daughter:

- Concerned about her daughter's teacher failing all the students in the class. Her daughter performed well when home schooled but is now a low-performing student.
- Report card is showing incorrect absences. Parent was told it was a system issue.
- Parent was not notified that the schools would be closed for winter break.

Superintendent's Response:

- *Since the transition from Educational Achievement Authority (EAA) to DPSCD there is a challenge with staffing that have affected the culture of the school.*
- *Iranetta Wright, Deputy Superintendent of Schools, will investigate the concern of the teacher failing the entire class.*
- *There is a challenge with the current grading and attendance system called MiStar. The District have an Request for Proposal (RFP) to replace MiStar.*

Questions, Comments, and Concerns

The Reverend Joyce Irvin Harris, Cass Technical High School legacy alumnus, commented that she too was concerned with the entrance requirements for Cass and that she is looking forward to the meeting with stakeholders.

Superintendent's Response:

The District will be scheduling a meeting specifically to address concerns at Cass next month.

Closing Remarks

Vice President Peterson-Mayberry closed out the meeting providing contact information encouraging the audience to email any questions or concerns they may have to the members or superintendent.

Chair Dr. Taylor thanked all for attending and informed the audience that a summary of the meeting will be posted on line.

Adjournment

The Community Meeting ended at 7:15pm