

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2006
7:15 PM – OPEN SESSION
WACTC –ROOM 303
MULTI MEDIA LAB

Called to Order by Chairman Marc Dubois
Moment of Silence
Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:	Marc Dubois, Chairman	Present
	Allen Auclair	Present
	Michelle Williams	Present
	Eleanor Nadeau	Present
	Anita McGuire-Forcier	Present

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

- **Marlene Smith, WMS Teacher:** Announced that they will be doing the Jennifer Rivera Awards again this year and one student's name has already been submitted. She wanted to know what WSC meeting date was available for her to make the award presentations. She was told that the last meeting in May would be okay.
- **Donna Vescera, Leo Savoie Elementary PTO:** Stated that the March of Dimes Walk/Play-A-Thon at Leo Savoie was approved at the last meeting, but Dr. Macera was to get back to them about whether it must be held on a weekend. It had been held on a school day during the past two years. Dr. Macera forwarded a letter to her from Dr. Flaherty at the RI Dept. of Education regarding the required amount of instructional time as of 9/8/05. As a result, the PTO submitted a new proposal, which includes a breakdown of the educational benefit of the activity as well as a decrease in the amount of time each student would participate in the event. Mr. Dubois asked Dr. Macera if she was comfortable with the new proposal and she said she didn't have a problem with the 60-minute activity. "The previous proposal was for two hours. I will support this event being held during the school day," said Macera.
- **Evelyn Robinson, PTO Representative, 2nd & 5th Avenue Schools:** Spoke regarding a recent newspaper article involving the dismissal of students and showing the hazards of the students walking in front of vehicles and in the road. She said that some parents have stepped up and are making flags and standing outside at dismissal time to help kids cross the streets. "Even the drivers are more attentive." She also announced an outreach program conducted by Crossroads RI to help address the unsafe activities—sex, drugs, etc.-- among young teens. The program is being operated through Thundermist to make kids aware of the dangers of such activities and the outreach team goes out into the community.
- **Mrs. Auclair, Parent:** Spoke regarding lack of communication between the WSC, administration, parents and the community at large in reference to the passage of the Youth Pride program at the WMS. She had listened to the presentation by Youth Pride at the last school committee meeting and took offense to a comment that was made by one of the organization's representatives about "once people are educated...". "I considered myself educated. I'm against teaching sex education at school because I think parents should be the ones to talk to their kids about these issues. I have open communication with my children." She said that her son in elementary school came home one day after health education class and asked about how sperm and eggs get together. Also, since there are both boys and girls in the class, the kids are embarrassed talking about their body parts with the opposite sex present. "Gay issues are now brought in. Anyone can be bullied. My son was bullied. I am an open-minded person, no matter how prudish I may seem right now. I try very hard to raise my children to have respect for everyone and not to judge. Now I have to worry about my kids learning about these issues in health class as part of their curriculum? It's against our religion." She thinks a survey should go around afterwards to see if the program is helping and wanted to know who is teaching the class. Mrs. Auclair thinks that Mrs. Forcier should understand how she feels since she has a child at the WMS. In the future, Auclair said she would be looking at the curriculum more closely when it comes to the next election. She had quite a few parents approach her about this particular issue.

Mr. Dubois stated that the program is only for 8th graders and that parents have to sign a consent form in order for their child to participate. Dr. Macera said that 8th grade was the only grade to which she would consent to offering the program and felt that it was age-appropriate. "The Board of Regents and Dept. of Health fully supports it and if it was rejected and bounced back to them, they would overrule it," said Macera. She reported

that she had the Gay Pride people come in to meet with the administration at the WMS on two occasions and they provided the names of at least 15 other school districts using this curriculum. The health teacher teaches the program and they have speakers come in. A consent form is sent home in order for kids to participate and if the parents won't allow it, an alternative activity is provided for them and they are not penalized in any way.

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS – Dr. Maureen Macera, Superintendent

Congratulated all the students at Harris Elementary & Globe Park for receiving plaques from the State of Rhode Island for their participation and outstanding effort in the Recycling Program. A ceremony took place at the State House on Tuesday morning, with Governor Carcieri, members of the General Assembly, and other state dignitaries'. Mr. Peter Fontaine, Director of Facilities & Security was praised for his coordinating efforts with the all the schools in the district. Congratulated everyone for their participation in this program. Gave kudos' to Harris Elementary School for receiving the *first* grant awarded through Roger Williams Park Zoo's Trixie Fund. The grant was established with a \$25,000 starter grant from Bank of America and is awarded to help subsidize the cost of zoo field trips for Rhode Island urban school children. Thanked everyone for their hard work in acquiring this grant for our school children. Congratulated Tom Vanisavath and James Lemire for being selected to the Rhode Island All State Cheerleading Team. Announced that Rus Miclette and Monte Davis were selected to the RI All State Wrestling Team. Craig Pearce and Ronny Genao were selected to the RI All State Indoor Track Team. Commended all Coaches and Athletes who have been selected for "All Division Team" and "Athletic Honors."

Motion to receive and place on file: M. Williams

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: 4/5/06 CLOSED SESSION

Motion to Approve: A. Auclair

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA: Motion to approve: M. Williams 2nd: A. Auclair (Unan. Appr.)

1. Personnel Actions

Certified Appointments
Non-Certified Appointments

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

Brennan Oil Heating Co./Fuel/District/Local
Konica Minolta/Copier/WHS/Local
Murray Plumbing & Heating/Waste Line Installations/WACTC/Voc Revenue
Shilepsky O'Connell Casey Hartley Michon Yelen, LLP/Promac/McFee/Local
Visconti & Boren/ Promac/ McFee/ Local

3. Field Trip/ Conference Requests

Reading Recovery Conference/ Cambridge, MA/ Reading Recovery Grant

4. Home School Requests (1)

Mrs. Janet Kenyon for Cassandra, Gr. 9, for 2006-2007 academic year

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

COMMUNICATIONS: Ms. Williams announced that kindergarten registrations for next year are coming up and named the schools and times of sign-ups. She asked parents to please not wait until the last minute to register their kids.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

CONFERENCES: None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Bid Award

• **Title I Consultant –**

Motion to award to N.E. Educational Consultants of E. Greenwich, RI for a total Bid Award of \$53,460 for a 3-year contract: A. Auclair 2nd: E. Nadeau

Roll Call Vote: (MD/yes; AA/yes; MW/yes; EN/yes; AMF/yes) 5 yes. Motion passed.

Mr. Auclair asked for clarification as to what this expense is for. Mrs. Goodman explained that it's for a mandatory evaluation of the Title 1 program by an outside consultant to verify that the funds are being spent as they should be. A report is compiled and then submitted to the state.

2. Approval of Food Service Contract Renewal

Motion to approve: A. Forcier 2nd: M. Dubois
Roll Call Vote: (MD/yes; AA/yes; MW/yes; EN/yes; AMF/yes) 5 yes. Motion passed.

Mrs. Goodman noted that there's a slight increase in the prices for those paying full price for lunches. The reduced price lunch prices will remain the same. Lunch prices have not been increased since at least 1993. Mrs. Nadeau asked how many kids get free and reduced lunch in the system. There are approximately 133 students who receive reduced lunch and 1,114 students who receive free lunch.

3. Approval of Elementary Promotion Policy Revisions – 1st Passage

Motion to approve: M. Williams 2nd: A. Forcier
Roll Call Vote: (MD/yes; AA/no; MW/yes; EN/yes; AMF/yes) 4 yes – 1 no. Motion passed.

Dr. Macera read the proposed changes and specified what the old vs. the new wording would be. She also explained the revisions. She explained that we are making the criteria more explicit. Mrs. Nadeau asked if the rubric grading will always stay that way or if it can revert back to the "A, B, C" method. "The state is moving towards grading by proficiency and will probably mandate it across all grade levels. We are currently using this grading method in the elementary grades only," said Macera. Mrs. Nadeau said that parents find this new system very vague. "Before, they always knew where they stood," she said. Mr. Michael Caparso, Principal of 5th Avenue School, said that he prefers the rubric method because it shows the progress a student has made rather than if they just pass or fail. "If they are a '2' at the beginning of the year, they can improve and be a '4' at the end of the year. It's an educational philosophy," he said. Dr. Macera pointed out that the report card has specific tasks that are graded and the parents can see what task their child is not mastering. Sylvia Natale, Principal of Governor Pothier School, agreed saying that, "Learning is a process. It takes time and steps and the rubric says it all." These report cards are based on federal and state mandates. Mrs. Nadeau asked to get a copy of an elementary report card because she hasn't actually seen one yet. Mrs. Forcier said that she was confused also because her child would have a '2' for each semester and she was thinking that he/she wasn't getting any better. Dr. Macera explained that the parents need to look at each trimester separately – not average them together. Mr. Auclair asked how these changes will benefit the students and how they fit into the Strategic Plan for the district. Dr. Macera explained that the Strategic Plan states that we move towards standards-based report cards. She also hopes that they will encourage more parent/teacher dialog. Mr. Auclair said he is not in support of the changes that are proposed. "This isn't what I had in mind. I was at the meeting on April 11th when this was discussed and wasn't in favor of making these changes. As far as summer enrichment programs, my daughter attended and she felt it was a waste of time. I am not looking at this as a penalty program," he said. Dr. Macera spoke about a 220-day program for kids with learning disabilities that has always been run by the WED which the state helps us fund. Auclair asked if we could send a syllabus home at the beginning of the school year showing exactly what kids are to be learning. Dr. Macera said that it's on the website.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – Dr. Maureen Macera, Superintendent

Dr. Macera reported that she and Miriam Goodman had a meeting today with the legislators about the budget. The legislators were extremely cordial to them and asked some probing questions. They were complimentary about how hard we advocate for our children and the WED's lack of a deficit. They did indicate that when they are able, they will

make whatever accommodations they could. Dr. Macera feels confident that she and Mrs. Goodman were given a very good reception.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier

2nd: M. Williams (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE

Nadeau: She enjoyed hearing from the parents on the report card issue. She also enjoyed the presentation put on by Dr. Macera and Miriam Goodman at the PAC Meeting on April 12. All the WSC members received a copy of the **Kids Count Fact Book** recently. She thinks that all the members of the City Council and the Mayor should get a copy. "These are cold, hard facts and very easy to understand. We have a very high poverty rate in this district. The key to getting out of poverty is education. It's a wake-up call." She invited the radio audience to come to the next City Council Meeting to fight for all of our kids' education.

Williams: Congratulated ~~Lee~~ Peter Fontaine on the recycling program, saying she's happy it's going to be at the middle school next year. Announced the next SELAC Meeting on May 4th at Gov. Pothier. In reference to Youth Pride, she received a phone call asking why we are teaching our kids to be homosexuals in school. "It's not teaching them to be that way. If we can teach just three kids some level of tolerance, that's great. It's only for kids 13 years old and up. There's a lot of ugliness in this world and if we can teach just a little tolerance, that's important!"
[amended 6-10-06]

Auclair: He asked if there is an opt-out for parents that don't want their child to participate in the Youth Pride Program. He was told that there is. He announced that there's a Board of Regents meeting tomorrow at 4 p.m. at the Shepherd's Building in Providence. They meet the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month and the meetings are open to the public. There is an open comment section also. He threw out some "what ifs" in regards to the high cost of oil and some possible alternatives, such as shifting the school year by three months to avoid heating all the buildings. "What if we look at the busing policy and mileage limits to cut costs because of higher fuel prices?" He suggested changing the starting time for middle school students to improve learning because studies have shown that they need more sleep. He also suggested looping teachers in elementary grades to follow students through Grades 1-3. Auclair said he had met with Mr. Dubois and Dr. Macera about limiting his speaking at the WSC meetings, because they have received complaints that he was causing the meetings to go too long. "I will take it under advisement, but if I have questions I want to ask, I will ask them. I have been asked why I have been quiet during the past couple of meetings and that's why. I believe in communication and I always encourage people to contact me. I will try to keep my comments brief. The last meeting had way to many things on the agenda. It wasn't my fault it ran long."

Dubois: Congratulated to the two schools that won recycling awards. Congratulated the students responsible for the **Villa Novan Newspaper**. He said it contains very well written articles. Announced an upcoming yard sale on May 6th at the WHS to raise funds to send the SkillsUSA Gold Medal winners from the WACTC to Kansas City. Encouraged people to support that event. Told Mrs. Auclair he is still working on getting lights at Harris School for the parking lot. The problem is that it abuts a nursing home and the residents don't want lights shining in their windows at night. He is speaking to the City about it. Thanked everyone who is working very hard to get more money for our kids. Announced that the City Council will be doing the budget at its May 22nd meeting.

Forcier: Announced a Nature Walk taking place at Bernon Heights on April 30th. Wants to meet with Mrs. Auclair about the need for sex education and how many kids in our schools had kids last year. "They really need this education." Wished the high school band and chorus good luck at their competition in Virginia.

Motion to adjourn at 8:48 p.m.: M. Dubois

2nd: A. Auclair (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary