

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2007
7:00 PM – OPEN SESSION
Woonsocket Area Career & Technical Center
Multimedia Room 303

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:

- **Robert Duhamel, 30 Glaude Lane:** Was present with his granddaughter to address an issue about a teacher at the WMS. His granddaughter, Monica, a 6th grade WMS student, then got up and spoke, saying that she brought in a project to the WMS on January 11th and was absent on January 19th. She found out that the teacher had thrown out the student projects. She said that Mr. Theroux called and said that the janitor may have thrown them out. Monica was upset because she had worked a month on this project with her grandfather and wanted to keep it. She was also upset because the teacher has not yet apologized for this happening. Mr. Dubois asked Monica what grade she got on her project. Monica told him she got an "A+". He told her that he checked with the WMS and found out that some of the projects were thrown out by accident. "It wasn't done on purpose and we are sorry that it happened. At least you can remember the good time you had building it with your grandfather," he told her.
- **Cindy McNeill, Parents Advisory Council Co-Chair:** Expressed some concerns and questions about the Connected Math Program at the WMS that parents have. "It was implemented with a grant. When the grant runs out, what happens? Does the curriculum change? How come there aren't enough books? Will more books be purchased? Parents would like to be informed about changes in the curriculum. Can parents ask questions after the presentation tonight on this subject?" asked McNeill. Mr. Dubois told her they can ask questions at that time.
- **Richard DiPardo, Woonsocket Teachers' Guild President, 134 Huntington Ave.:** Spoke regarding a request made at the last meeting by Mrs. Nadeau and Ms. Williams for Atty. Ackerman to write a policy regarding gifts being given to the WSC and administrators involved with contract negotiations. "Over the past 36 years, no gift has ever been given to them by the union. I have given Dr. Macera flowers twice—once when she was appointed superintendent and once when her mother passed away. Did we go out to eat dinner during negotiations? Yes. That has been done for many years. Everyone paid for their own dinner. The School Committee bought pizza once or twice. No one has ever expressed to me that we have ever tried to buy influence. We don't have the resources to buy legislators like in other cities. It seems we have more important things to tackle than this. You might have wanted to have Mr. Ackerman write an anti-fraternization policy instead. It's access to the WSC members, administrators and union officials that can provide influence. Legislative bodies have to go out of their way to avoid the image of any impropriety. I don't have meals with you other than what I've mentioned. I don't call you. I may email you. Friendship is a very difficult thing to regulate. If you deal with someone every day, that has the potential to have more influence than anything else. I have not had any communications from anyone that anything I have done or the union has done is improper. The military and Fortune 500 companies have anti-fraternization policies because they understand the implications of it," said DiPardo. Mrs. Nadeau asked him to explain what he meant to be fraternization between the WSC members and union members. He used his wife as an example because she is the Guidance Dept. Head at the WHS. DiPardo said he does not discuss work with her. "If a group of people have access to the WSC by going out to eat every week or accessibility by telephone very often, you have to watch out for that. When my son was about to reach kindergarten, there was a big "to-do" because I spoke up as a father saying that I thought it would hurt his son if he had to start a year later. I was told that I couldn't express my opinion as President of the WTG on this matter. People in positions such as ours have to worry about how things look to others," explained DiPardo.

Mrs. Nadeau didn't think her proposed policy and his issue have anything in common. "If the purpose of the policy is to keep the WSC immune from any influence, I don't think it will do that. By proposing such a policy, people will think something improper has happened and it hasn't," stressed DiPardo. "After the negotiations were over, everyone on the Negotiating Committee was invited to Camille's with a guest and it didn't say you had to pay your own way. As a person who was invited, I think I am entitled to an opinion," said Nadeau. DiPardo maintained that there is the impression of influence when members of the WSC are constantly seen in the presence of the same people. "It's very difficult to legislate morality. I think Atty. Ackerman could write a crackerjack policy," said DiPardo. "I make up my own mind and I am not going to live in a vacuum. I have friends and I have acquaintances. I get information and I check it out. If I go out after the meeting with another WSC member, is that inappropriate?" asked Nadeau. DiPardo told her that more than two members doing that is legislated by law. Discussion then took place about Natalie Brennan's name being brought up at a recent WSC meeting during Open Session in regards to a transfer to another position. Mrs. Nadeau maintained that she didn't mention the person's name—that it was Dr. Macera and she has the tape to prove it.

RECOGNITIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Maureen Macera

Congratulated the coaches and athletes on their success in the Fall Championships and named them individually. Congratulated the WMS SMILE Club for working with students on environmental issues. Publicly thanked the Mayor for her support of the Resource Officer at the WMS and Chief Houle and the Woonsocket Police Department for their support. Thanked the state education department for providing funding for security for the after school program at the WHS.

Motion to receive and place on file: M. Williams 2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 10, 2007 OPEN/CLOSED

Motion to Approve: M. Williams 2nd: A. Auclair (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:**Motion to approve Consent Agenda with the following exemptions: M. Williams**

- *Certified Personnel Appointment (Lisa Lanoue) & a Transfer under FYI – Removed by E. Nadeau*
- *Purchases/Transfers Over \$2k – Carter, Colwell Debuque, Inc. removed by A. Auclair*

2nd: **A. Auclair (Unanimously Approved)**

1. Personnel Actions

Certified Appointments – Lisa Lanoue (Removed by E. Nadeau)

Non-Certified Appointments

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

Dell Computers/Computers/Good Shephard/Title II Grant

NRI Collaborative/Virtual Learning Enrollments/WHS/Feinstein/Local

Carter, Colwell Debuque, Inc./Spec. Ed. Consulting/WMS/Accept Grant – Removed by A. Auclair

3. Field Trip/Conference Requests

Close Up for New Americans, Washington, DC/WHS/Fundraiser

Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders Conference, Columbus,OH/Gov. Pothier/Reading Recovery Grant

Rutgers University/WHS Debate Team/Fundraiser

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

EXEMPTIONS TO CONSENT AGENDA:**CERTIFIED APPOINTMENTS:**

- ***Transfer Discussion:*** Mrs. Nadeau stated that she had a problem with a transfer at the December 20th meeting. "If this position was posted, it was posted without a job description," she said. Dr. Macera stated that there was a job description. "This is a transfer to a brand-new position—that's what I have a problem with," maintained Nadeau. Dr. Macera stated that the position was posted, adding that Dr. Ken Swanson made the recommendation. "It was for a program at the WMS instituted this year. There were three people that applied.

Only one person had the prerequisite certification and also highly qualified status. This person had the highest seniority meeting this criteria," explained Macera. When asked if all the applicants were interviewed, Dr. Macera said she didn't know. Mrs. Goodman stated that in some cases they do interview all the applicants and in some cases they don't. "Why isn't this listed as a certified appointment instead of as a transfer?" asked Nadeau. "This happens all the time—especially in special education," explained Macera. Mrs. Nadeau felt that if it's a transfer to a new position—not an existing position—that it should be listed under Certified Appointments for the WSC to vote on. Dr. Macera told her that the superintendent is allowed to make a transfer for the good of the department. Mrs. Nadeau started to go into the details of the transfer and Dr. Macera told her that she was very uncomfortable going into it at this meeting. Mrs. Nadeau said she didn't feel uncomfortable and said that it was about the position—not the person. Dr. Macera felt it was very much about the person. Ms. Williams said she had done some research on requirements for middle school endorsement and found something about if a teacher leaves the WMS, they are no longer exempt from the regulation to meet these requirements. Dr. Macera still has not gotten a ruling about whether or not the Feinstein Academy is part of the WMS—just being held at a different location.

Motion to approve appointment of Lisa Lanoue as a full-time Grade 3 Teacher at Citizens Memorial through the end of the school year at Masters Step 3: A. Auclair

2nd: A. Forcier/M. Williams

(Roll Call Vote: 5 yes) Motion approved.

Mr. Auclair asked if this appointment addresses the question that was asked at the last WSC meeting about the teacher at Citizens. Dr. Macera said that it does not because she has to go by the contract. She explained that there had been only two teachers in that room—not four. Mrs. Nadeau asked if this person is already in the system. Mrs. Filomeno told her that this person is currently in a half-year position and her contract ends on Friday. She was appointed for one-half year for someone out on maternity leave. "It's not a transfer," said Filomeno. Mrs. Nadeau stated that when she visits schools, she hears from substitutes that have gotten great reviews and have not been hired. She noticed that many times people are hired at higher steps and it costs the system more money. Dr. Macera said she would provide the data at the next meeting on how many subs have been hired. "We want to keep excellent people and try very, very hard to do that," she said. Mrs. Nadeau thinks it would help if there were a column added to the appointments form showing where people are coming from if they are already in the system. Dr. Macera will see if that can be added.

PURCHASES/TRANSFERS OVER \$2,000:

Motion to approve purchase of consulting services from Carter, Colwell Dubuque, Inc. not to exceed \$45,000 from the IDEA/Accept Grant: A. Auclair

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

Dr. Macera explained that the district has 17 self-contained classrooms and because of the new regulations for teachers to become highly qualified, she wants to hire two consultants with the approval of RI Dept. of Education. Carole Lerner explained that the two consultants will go into the schools two days a week and interview the teacher assistants and special education teachers looking for the most efficient way to provide services within the guidelines. Mrs. Nadeau was told that one employee was asked who were the best teachers and who were the worst teachers. Mrs. Lerner had heard that also and reported it to the consultants. "They were aghast! They had asked for recommendations of whom they should talk to from Dr. McGee. The rumors are baseless. We are still in the investigation phase," said Lerner. "The consultants will report to the WSC their findings?" asked Auclair. "Yes, and to the parents as well," answered Macera. Auclair asked that SELAC be included. Dr. Macera has asked the consultants to meet with them.

COMMUNICATIONS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

CONFERENCES:

1) CMP-II - Judy Keeley- RIDE SPECIALIST

Ms. Keeley stated that she was present to address any questions or concerns about the Connected Math II Program. Ms. Williams asked how Paul Gagnon is trained in CMP. Keeley responded that training for the forerunner to CMP II,

“Springboard”, was provided to him. She added that he has extensive training in that program. “Why did we go to CMP instead of basic Math?” asked Williams. Giving some history of how this came about, Keeley explained that about ten years ago, there were seven tracks. Later, there were four tracks and there was no curriculum to give them guidance. The textbook was considered the curriculum. Through grants, they were able to explore other things, but didn’t have the funds to adopt anything. The WMS took the grade-level expectations and fashioned planners to help reduce redundancy, which there is a lot of middle schools. “Publishers will all tell you theirs is the best product in the world. The teachers at the WMS didn’t look at just the CMP program,” said Keeley. Ms. Williams had heard from other districts that there are eight books and no district has completed all eight books. “There has been a lot of criticism of CMP. It has actually been abolished in many states. This program comes with a lot of reading and our students are not reading at their grade level in many cases. California threw the program out. We were also told we would get enough books and calculators and now we have kids sharing books and calculators. Many states have thrown this program out. To me, we are going backwards—not forwards,” said Williams. Ms. Keeley explained that she was on the review panel for this program. “There were 100 people on the panel. There were two levels of panels. In terms of research, as much as you can find pro, you can probably find against. CMP has been implemented very successfully in many states. If the program is not implemented properly, it will fail,” Keeley stated. Williams questioned the effectiveness of coaches that have the same training level as the teachers. To her, it was all about the money and wondered if anyone had taken the time to determine if this program was the best thing for the students in our district. It was Dr. Macera’s understanding that the teachers at the WMS selected this program.

Paul Gagnon, Director of the Math Dept., stated that there were four or five programs presented to the teachers. They voted for CMP II because there were other districts that were having success. He said that the booklets are needed because these are the ones that develop the concepts, which our students have problems with according to test scores. “If you throw this program out, we will be going backwards,” he said. Ms. Williams wants Mr. Gagnon to provide her with evidence from CMP that their program works. “They’ll have tons of it—of course. This program does the concept development that I have never seen in any other textbook,” answered Gagnon. He invited Williams into the classroom to see for herself. He noted that we use the CMP II, which is the revised edition. The complaint with the original CMP was that it was dropping the skills. Janessa Allen, an 8th grade WMS Math teacher, stated that she went to the training over the summer and implemented the program in the classroom. She likes the program and said it’s a different way of teaching problem solving. She does go over the reading portions to make sure that the students understand what they have read. Mrs. Forcier said her son is in the 8th grade at the WMS and wanted to know how they will accomplish what they need to for next year. Ms. Allen feels that all her students will be prepared for 9th grade Algebra and Physics. She feels her students will be better prepared than if they didn’t use CMP. Mrs. Forcier researched the CMP and found a positive for each negative. Her son has struggled with Math and this is the first year he has actually done well. “He is doing better than he has ever done. That’s all I have to go by,” she said. Mr. Gagnon said that any shortcoming from this year in the 8th grade he will report to his staff at the WHS and instruct them to cover it.

Mr. Dubois also did a lot of research. “If you Google it, you get many pros and cons. I value Mr. Gagnon’s opinion. He has 35 years experience,” he said. “I think you will see an increase in test scores, but you need to give it time,” said Gagnon. When Dubois said he was sure there were times when a teacher doesn’t get through a textbook, Mr. Gagnon agreed, adding that the common planning time helps because the teachers can see where everyone is. Ms. Keeley thanked Mr. Gagnon and the teachers for coming up with a very good implementation plan. A meeting will be held with the parents so that they can feel more included in the process. Mr. Auclair asked why it took so long to change the curriculum if the one we were using wasn’t working. “When the four books were chosen years ago, the teachers were not included in the process. What’s unique in Woonsocket is that all the special education teachers are trained in this program also. This program was on the table when the four textbooks were chosen. I asked the superintendent back then to bring it to the teachers and it wasn’t done,” explained Keeley. Auclair’s problem was with the way it was put in since it was listed under Purchases Over \$2,000. “I did not see that it was replacing the textbooks,” he said. Dr. Macera told him that this program is grant-funded and is a pilot program. “When the pilot is over, if the teachers don’t feel it was effective, then it will not be instituted. Textbooks are still available. I can bring every grant forward for approval if the WSC desires. The GLEs and the GSEs are the curriculum. That’s mandated by the state. This is a program that supports that curriculum,” explained Macera. Mr. Auclair spoke about the WSC’s policy of taking a roll-call vote for a change in curriculum. “At no time did we ever feel that we were changing the curriculum. We had the CREST documents and then the GLEs came out. We looked at this as a tool for implementing that curriculum,” explained Gagnon.

Donna Houle, parent, asked Ms. Keeley if all the 8th grade modules have to be completed to meet the GLEs. “No, the GLEs are the driving force and are not one-year only,” answered Keeley. Ms. Allen added that she fully expects to get through the four 8th grade books and everything her kids need to have covered prior to next year. When asked about the number of booklets available, Mr. Gagnon explained that the original grant bought 1500 booklets—500 for each grade level. They are also servicing the special education population also. “The teachers have been keeping them in binders in the classroom because they are booklets and they are afraid of what will happen when they are

taken home. There are 1500 books and we have 1600 students," he said. Carole Lerner, Special Ed Director, said that she was a special education teacher working with special education students using CMP in the classroom. "You can't assume that students with reading problems can't do well in Math," she stressed. Carmen Boucher, parent of a child in elementary school, was taken aback with Ms. Williams' statement that we have kids in 6th, 7th and 8th grade reading at an elementary grade level. She doesn't think that because students have reading problems that we should lower the Math curriculum to meet their needs. "Let's address the reading problem," she suggested. Mrs. Majewski, parent, thinks that the parents feel like this is a brand-new curriculum. "It would have been nice to have a forum before this was implemented to give parents a heads-up on what was going to happen. A lot of this anxiety could have been avoided. Keep us informed," she asked. Mr. Auclair asked when we started using the program. He was told that it was implemented after the NECAP testing, approximately November 1st.

2) Presentation of Kid's First – Beverage Law presented by Dorothy Brayley, Chair of RIHSC

Brayley provided the WSC with a packet of information in addition to her presentation. She explained that there are two new laws in the state that school districts must comply with: a) The school committee must address the health and wellness of students and employees; and b) The school committee must establish a subcommittee of the school board to decrease obesity and address school health and wellness policies for students and employees consistent with Section 16-21-28 of the General Laws. She provided survey results of where the RI districts are in this process, as well as blank surveys for each grade level which can be used to determine where we are as a district. Much information was provided in the packet on ways to achieve, by October 2007, the goals of: 1) providing all children preK-12 with daily opportunities to engage in physical activity in addition to quality physical education that helps develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors and confidence needed to be physically active for life, and 2) adopting policies ensuring that foods and beverages available on school campuses and at school events contribute toward eating patterns that are consistent with Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Donna Houle asked when the laws governing snacks go into effect and how it affects fundraisers. Brayley told her the goal is to be met by January 2008. "The law covers foods sold during the school day and there are exceptions," said Brayley.

Motion to take New Business #2 out of order by unanimous consent: M. Dubois (Consent given.)

NEW BUSINESS: (taken out of order)

3) Backpack Food Program: Marc Roy, Foodservice Director

Mr. Roy explained that this program provides backpacks filled with nutritious, ready-to-eat food for students who are at risk for hunger on the weekends. The backpacks will be discreetly distributed to these students on the last school day prior to a weekend or holiday vacation and are returned on the next school day. Mr. Dubois asked how the backpacks could be "discreetly" distributed. "The backpacks are delivered to the guidance office and distributed there," explained Roy. He added that the program was developed in Providence and there will be no cost to the district. The Food Bank will provide the food to be distributed, which will be purchased by Sodexo. Sodexo will donate the initial funding of \$3,000 to the Food Bank to cover the cost of approx. \$5 per month per student. They also solicit staff and get donations from corporate sponsors. The school counselors will determine/select students to receive the backpacks, who will remain anonymous. The Sodexo team will provide volunteers to collate the backpacks. They may also work with the Student Council or other student groups to get volunteers to do this as a community service project. They usually start implementing this program at the high school level. Mrs. Forcier asked if there are other siblings of a student selected, if they can get a backpack for them also. Mr. Roy told her that the siblings are included once a family is identified.

Motion to approve: A. Forcier

2nd: A. Auclair (Roll Call Vote – 5 yes). Passed.

CONFERENCES: (continued)

4) Update of Universal Breakfast Program – M. Goodman

Mrs. Goodman reviewed the report she submitted to the WSC. She reported that during the 90 days that breakfast has been served, the program operated at a deficit of \$17,900. She and Marc Roy, Foodservice Director, are closely monitoring the program and anticipate that the overall foodservice program will operate with a surplus, with revenue generated from the lunch program being more than sufficient to cover any deficit generated from the breakfast program. Mr. Auclair asked if data is being collected to show the benefits of the program. Criteria on which data is being collected include tardiness and attendance, visits to the nurse and subjective information from the teachers. Periodic updates will continue.

5) Presentation of Interlocal Trust Ethic Commission Rules– Superintendent & SC Member Anita McGuire/Forcier

Dr. Macera reviewed, for the WSC's information, a copy of the presentation that was given by Atty. Ursillo on the RI Code of Ethics governing state and municipal elected or appointed officials and employees of state and local governments, of boards, Commissions and agencies.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. FY08 Personnel Supplement – Miriam Goodman

Mrs. Goodman explained that this Draft Personnel Budget for FY08 would change many times over the next few months. The grand total for salaries amounts to \$38,624,334, which is a 5.17% increase over FY07. Dr. Macera reported on a bill that will allow the WED to use vans instead of buses in certain circumstances, which will provide significant savings for the district.

3. Proposal of Academic & Social Probation Policy- WMS: Dr. Patrick McGee, WMS Principal

Dr. McGee explained that over the last few years, it has been the consensus of the teachers that raising the bar for students was a priority. A committee was convened prior to Christmas made up of teachers. There is no existing policy right now at the WMS. There was a policy for suspensions and pertaining to attendance at dances, etc. He presented the newly developed policy, which he would like to take effect the beginning of the 3rd quarter. Mr. Dubois was surprised to find that this was never addressed in the handbook before now. He wants to make sure that everyone is properly notified before the new policy goes into effect. Ms. Williams suggested an effective date of February 1st to give more time for notification. Dr. Macera thought a little more time was needed to get the word out and suggested implementation after February vacation. Dr. McGee was asked to read the proposed policy.

Mr. McLaughlin, WMS Physical Education teacher, asked why they want to exclude a kid with problems from the one person/mentor, (such as their coach), that they can turn to for help. He thinks requiring the student to still show up and practice but not play in a game is more beneficial than totally excluding the child. Dr. McGee said there are activities where the student could still get involved. When Mr. Auclair asked if this policy had to be passed twice, Mr. Dubois told him "Yes, I believe so." Mr. Auclair suggested a requirement that the student participate in some type of support program as a condition of their probation. Mr. Dubois agreed. Ms. Williams agreed with Mr. McLaughlin's suggestion and thought there should be a distinction made between the kids that just don't do well because they don't get it and those that just don't apply themselves. Mrs. Majewski noted that at the WHS, the coaches ask each teacher to submit a progress report every two weeks for their athletes.

Motion to Table: M. Dubois

2nd: M. Williams (Roll Call Vote: 5 yes) TABLED.

4. Proposed SC Policy/Gifts – ITEM NOT HEARD DUE TO WSC POLICY TO NOT START ANY NEW BUSINESS AFTER 10:30 P.M.

Mr. Dubois informed the WSC that Leo Fontaine has agreed to a joint meeting with the WSC & the City Council on either February 12th or the 26th at probably 6 or 7 p.m. Dr. Macera, Miriam Goodman & Atty. Ackerman will need to attend. The City Council wants an update on the Promac case also.

Motion to adjourn at 10:35 p.m.: M. Williams

2nd: A. Auclair (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle
WSC Recording Secretary