

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20, 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

Mr. Dubois noted that there was an omission last week with the Jennifer Rivera Awards. Marlene Smith added that there was a miscommunication that occurred and the parents didn't get notified of the presentation being done at the last meeting. She presented the award to the student.

CONFERENCES:

- **Leo A. Savoie Report on Positive Initiatives of FY07 – Karen MacBeth, Principal**

Ms. MacBeth noted that Leo Savoie Elementary is not a Title 1 School and, therefore, doesn't have a reading program. However, with the help of the WHS, she was able to get six honor students to come in and help out with the Barton Reading Program for struggling and/or dyslexic readers. MacBeth read a letter from one of the WHS students regarding her experiences with the program. This WHS girl's student was present to say a few words, but was then too shy to say anything. The other students in the program have shown great progress with the Barton program and the WHS students' help, as well as the help of the Savoie teacher assistants. MacBeth discussed the Lucy Caulkins Writing Program they have been using. It was purchased with the RI School Improvement Grant they received, which has been secured again for next year. She discussed the use of Grade Level Expectation binders that teachers use to track classroom lessons. They have been trained in the CASL system to help them develop a culture for collaborative inquiry and gain a deeper understanding of the link between their instruction and their students' learning. Leo Savoie School had 100% participation in Feinsein Hunger letters. A couple of 5th grade teachers showed games that their students developed. Savoie held a "game night". The games were based on books the students had read. The students also had to write the instructions for the games. Donations were received from area businesses, such as Avery, for the supplies they needed. MacBeth then discussed initiatives they have planned for 2007-2008.

- **Harris Elementary Report on Positive Initiatives of FY07 – T. Hazard, Principal**

Mr. Hazard discussed his assertive discipline program, which has helped to make the school safe and orderly. He noted that they have a strong and active School Improvement Team, as well as Parent/Teacher Organization. The PTO conducted "Breakfast With Your Child" twice this past year. Professional development included writing and math workshops. They received a Feinsein Grant and the students were able to go to the IMAX Theater twice. These trips were totally paid for by Feinsein. Harris School also supports the Soup Kitchen and received a recycling grant. They held a cookout with the nursing home next door. Family Information Nights were held, as well as a blood drive. Harris School conducted a Parent Café, where parents could come in to discuss things about the school privately. They did a lot of things with reading this year. Hazard stated that he would be going back to Coleman Elementary as Principal and Mr. Pickett will be taking over as Principal at Harris School in September.

- **Back to School Program Presentation – Neighborhood Health – J. Dowdy**

No one was in attendance to make this presentation.

- **Kids Klub School Age Coalition Presentation – T. Chaney**

Tracy Chaney was representing the Woonsocket School Age Coalition, which consists of the Boys & Girls Club of Woonsocket, Connecting for Children and Families, Hamlet Learning Center, Kids Klub, the YMCA and the YWCA. Chaney gave the history of the coalition and discussed how they work together to provide programming for Woonsocket children. They have discussed therapeutic childcare, which is designed to assist children with special health care needs through an integrated approach. Most of the children they are working with now were already in their program and mostly have behavioral issues. They recognize that they are an extension of the school – both before and after. Homework assistance is a huge part of what their programs do, especially with today's working parents. The Coalition has been doing more community outreach such as working with nursing homes, fire stations and the soup kitchen. Combined, they service approximately 300 to 400 children in the city. The Coalition has also discussed the impending budget cuts related to childcare subsidies and provider rates of reimbursement. The eligibility levels for children are going to change dramatically. About 2400 children will not be eligible for childcare because of the cuts. "It's a huge hit to our society. Once children are 13 years old, they will no longer be eligible for childcare. The provider reimbursement rates have been frozen since 2002," said Chaney. They have been collaborating on how they can save money and still provide good care, such as taking field trips together to save on busses.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Job description for Consolidation of Teaching Positions at Feinstein Learning Academy

Dr. Macera read her memorandum explaining her reasons for putting forth this new job description. She noted that Mr. Berman has agreed to step down as Principal and apply for a teaching position in multi-subject areas for which he's "highly qualified". The subjects are Math and Science. The posting is for two teachers who are multi-certified in various content areas, including English, Math and Science. This is required because we will be separating the instructional locations of the Middle School boys and girls and will need to hire only teachers that have multiple certifications, as well as exceptional skills. We will also need Teacher Leaders because of this separation of locations, which requires someone who is also administratively certified in order to handle student discipline. The Assistant Principal's position for oversight of the Feinstein Learning Academy as well as the WMS Special Ed Dept. means that this person will not be present at all times. A \$2,000 stipend for student discipline is proposed, which has been present in past contracts. Mr. Auclair asked if the administrative certification is a secondary one. Dr. Macera said, "Yes. It will be a teaching salary plus a stipend for disciplinary oversight." "The two teaching positions will fall under the current teachers' contract?" asked Auclair. Macera told him "Yes". Auclair's concern is that when the Feinstein Academy was established, they were supposed to develop an operational plan. "Separating the boys and girls should definitely assist in the discipline. The Feinstein Academy at the 2nd Avenue site will be for the girls and the elementary students. They want to build on the Buddy system. Having the boys at Social Street will enable us to have more space for them. There are more boys than girls," explained Macera. Auclair said he supports the Feinstein Academy, but doesn't know if we have an operational plan. When the WSC has held disciplinary hearings, they don't have the criteria to know whether this placement is a suitable one for each case. Macera said there are several written documents and they follow all the guidelines for resource services. "The Feinstein Academy is part of the middle school. It's a team decision as to whether a student gets into the Feinstein Academy," Macera said. Carole Lerner asked Auclair if he wanted to know if there's a process to move students into the Feinstein Academy. He said his concern is with non-IEP students and the process used with placing them. "There are written processes in place and it begins with the referrals process to a team that does an evaluation," said Lerner. Mr. Ferguson told Auclair that they needed a protocol to establish the school in the first place. He and Mr. Berman wrote up a pamphlet at the very start of the school year, which discusses what type of student the Feinstein Academy would be receiving. Mr. Auclair suggested that the written information come before the WSC for endorsement.

"If the girls and boys will be separated, will there be open slots?" asked Mrs. Nadeau. "Yes. Where we are now, we are running out of space. The enrollment this year was between 45 and 60 students. There are eight additional classrooms with the addition of the Social Street School," said Macera. Nadeau asked what would happen if the amount of girls increases, and Macera said that they might have to use a floor at Social Street for them. Nadeau asked what happened at Feinstein this year with the 8th grade students. "How many of them went on to the high school?" she asked. Mr. Berman told her that 22 went to the high school. Nadeau then asked about the elementary students. "Some will go to the WMS and some will go up to the next level at Feinstein. It's determined on a case-by-case basis," said Lerner. "How many students do we have placed out of district?" asked Williams. Dr. Macera told her we have brought back about 48 this year. Carole Lerner said that out-of-district placements vary from year to year. "It runs from 125 to 200 students," she said. Williams asked how more of these students can be brought back into the district and asked how many students we anticipate going to Social Street School. Lerner said that the limit would be 80 boys going to the Social Street School because it needs to be a smaller population. "How can

elementary students go to the Feinstein Academy if it's part of the WMS?" asked Williams. Dr. Macera explained that they are attached to an elementary school, which is Harris. "We would like to be able to bring back 20 students pretty quickly next year. We can't control kids moving in or out of the district, however. The majority of the students at Feinstein will probably come from the middle school," said Lerner. "Can Social Street and Feinstein be adapted for a medically fragile child?" asked Williams. Lerner told her, "No." Dr. Macera discussed the pros of having students brought back from out-of-district placements, such as the cost savings, more control of the instruction, and the students being in their own neighborhood. Mr. Auclair asked if we have the ability to monitor the dropout rate of the 8th graders that go into the WHS from Feinstein. Dr. Macera told him we have that ability and that 16 students graduated this year as a result of the Virtual Learning Program who otherwise, would not have graduated. Auclair would like to know if the data is available for the Feinstein students on their scores for the NECAP test. Mrs. Filomeno told him that the data is desegregated by classroom. Auclair said that he hasn't seen that in any of the state reports, and Filomeno explained that it would violate privacy rights for the state to do that. Auclair said he didn't need to see the names of the students either. "Who would have the final say if a student has been out-of-district for three or four years if the parents want to keep them there? Can we insist that the student come back to our district?" asked Dubois. Lerner explained that several meetings are held and, if necessary, a state mediator is called in. "Will one of these teachers always be at 2nd Avenue and one will be at Social Street no matter what the population?" Dubois asked. "Yes," answered Macera. Mrs. Nadeau asked about the continuation of the program for girls at Citizens Elementary. Macera told her that it would no longer be operated there.

Motion to approve: A. Forcier
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes.

2nd: M. Dubois
Motion passed.

2. Announcement of Social Street change of location – (R. Pickett/T. Hazard)

Dr. Macera read her memorandum to the WSC concerning this change. Mr. Pickett referred to the SALT Report of 2002 where it referred to the 100 year old building and how students could learn there. "This change moves these students to the two nearest schools in the district," he said. "What are we going to classify the change in the school? Is it redistricting?" asked Auclair. Macera told him that we aren't redistricting. "The students that are going there will no longer be going there," said Auclair. "We are changing the location of the classrooms there," explained Pickett. Mr. Auclair referred to an issue in Johnston where they had to get the Commissioner of Education involved. Dr. Macera said she is very familiar with this extremely complicated situation. "It's apples and oranges. It's a political fight. The two schools recommended for closure in Johnston are not the schools that were closed. We will be using Social Street for middle school children – not elementary children. We have the available space at the other two schools. It was the intention of the previous school committees that eventually all the older, smaller elementary schools would close after the new schools were built," she said. "We have to bus these students. We do that by district. In my mind, we are essentially redistricting," maintained Auclair. Dr. Macera said that we would make accommodations for bussing. "The walkers will be picked up at Social Street. If there's an overage of 2nd graders in one elementary school now, they are bussed to another with the space. It's done all over the state," said Macera. Auclair said he just wants to make sure it's legal to do this. "The only thing we would have to do is notify the Commissioner about the move due to the SALT Report and NECAP test results," said Macera. Mr. Pickett added that the majority of his parents are glad that their children will be going to a brand new school. Ms. Williams commended Mr. Pickett and his staff and asked if the classrooms that are being moved will still be considered Social Street students or Harris or Pothier school students. "The children will become students of Harris School or Pothier School," said Macera. "Then those parents will have a choice of schools, since Harris is a school of choice?" asked Williams. "Yes," answered Macera. "This is nothing new. When East Woonsocket School opened, it was already over-populated. Children have always been bussed to available space. It has never been an issue. Some parents weren't happy, but it varied from class to class. It has been going on as long as I can remember," said Mrs. Nadeau. Mr. Dubois pointed out that we have closed Pothier School, Grove Street School, Vose Street School and Kendrick Avenue School over the past several years. When Auclair mentioned an increase in bussing costs, Dr. Macera told him that there's no impact on bussing.

Motion to accept the plan presented by Dr. Macera with the result being that there will no longer be a school named Social Street School: A. Forcier

2nd: M. Williams

Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. Motion passed.

Motion to adjourn at 8:45 p.m.: M. Williams

2nd: A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary