

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27, 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:

- **Donna Houle, 130 Ward Street:** Asked what the dates were for the July and August WSC meetings. The July meeting is on the 18th and the August meetings are the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month. She asked when the piloted Connected Math Program is going to be placed on the agenda before the next school year starts. Dr. Macera said she has a meeting with Mary Canole tomorrow and she'll ask her for a written document from RIDE on their position with regard to this pilot program. "If the CMP2 Program is part of the state's corrective action plan for the WMS, it won't be coming back before the WSC for approval. We are in a whole new realm of authority at the WMS. I have to get further direction from the Commissioner at this point," said Macera. Houle asked if they would be receiving the remaining books for the series. "That's what the whole grant is about—not just training on the next four books," answered Macera. Houle asked about English textbooks that are being purchased for the WHS. Karen Karten explained that it's one textbook that is being purchased for Grades 7 & 10. Houle asked why the academic placement policy in the WMS handbook that's on tonight's agenda isn't listed separately under New Business. She feels that parents won't know about it otherwise until they get the handbook in September. Dr. Macera told her that this policy was discussed at another meeting and it's her understanding that it's a protocol—not a policy. Houle referred to the accelerated placement requirements and urged the WSC to look at this policy carefully. "It doesn't allow for any parent input or recommendations and as partners, parents should be able to give their input. I discussed this with Dr. McGee. There's only one accelerated class per grade level. I find it hard to believe that there are only 28 students in each grade that qualify for accelerated classes. I would like to see an amendment to the academic policy to include a full team of accelerated classes, which would enable 100 to 125 students to be placed in this program. My daughter is in the 6th Grade this year. She did extremely well and made high honors. Yet with the grades she achieved (all 90's), she was not placed in the accelerated program next year. I think she should be placed in that program again next year. They said she wasn't proficient with distinction on the NECAP test. That's one test. Only three students from this year's accelerated program are going into the program next year," said Houle.

Linda Majewski, 51 St. Hughes Street: She referred to a proposal to limit Good & Welfare to one meeting a month and spoke about a statute that states that the public should be able to present something at Good & Welfare for discussion. "Will we be in compliance if we do that? I don't want to see Good & Welfare end or be limited," she said. Mr. Dubois explained that it's not being eliminated. "We spoke about having one meeting a month for just business, which would include Good & Welfare. The other meeting that month would be for conferences and workshops," said Dubois. Majewski suggested having one or two schools a month present their positive initiatives. "The bussing policy that was passed and the change in school starting times were not presented to the PAC for advice and input. Why are we there?" she asked. Dr. Macera said that she asked every principal to speak to their parent group to get their input. Karen MacBeth added that there was a meeting with the PAC at McFee where it was discussed.

RECOGNITIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Macera

She said that she has been asked by Brigham and Women's Hospital to participate in an initiative for wellness in children on July 27th. She has asked Karen MacBeth and Mr. Nasuti to attend in her place.

Motion to receive and place on file: M. Williams

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: 6/13/07 Open/Closed & 6/18/07 Open

Motion to approve: M. Williams

2nd: A. Forcier/A. Auclair (Unan. Approved)

Minutes for 6/20/07 Open: Motion to Table: M. Dubois

2nd: M. Williams (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion to approve Consent Agenda with the following exception: M. Williams

- *Purchases & Transfers Over \$2,000*
RIASC Membership for FY08 – Local Funds – Removed by M. Williams

2nd: **E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)**

1. Personnel Actions

Certified Appointments/
Non-Certified Appointments

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

NEASC/Membership dues FY08/WHS/Local
RIASC/Membership FY08/School Committee/Local – Removed by MW
Wistow & Barylick, Inc./Services/McFee/Local

3. Disposal of Obsolete Equipment

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

RIASC/Membership FY08/School Committee/Local

Ms. Williams noted that the cost for this membership for the WSC members is \$9,231, which comes out of the local budget. "It's nice to belong to this, but with the budget being such as it is, can we decide to pay for it ourselves if we want? If we choose to join ourselves, let it be our responsibility," said Williams. When Dubois asked what the benefits of membership are, Dr. Macera said that it provides professional development and legal council for WSC members. Mrs. Forcier found it very helpful and had literature from them. She described the topics that are addressed in professional development. "The executive director, Tim Duffy, helps lobby with the legislature. They have been very helpful in trying to collaborate with school districts for cost savings. The largest benefit of membership is professional development. It's a way to help school committees exercise their governance in the correct way. It's a beneficial program, if it's utilized," said Auclair. Ms. Williams wondered if there was an association of city councilors and no one knew if there was.

Motion to Table: M. Williams
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes

2nd: M. Dubois

COMMUNICATIONS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Review & Approval of Health & Wellness Policy – P4-7.1 – 1st Passage K. MacBeth

Ms. MacBeth described the makeup of the Health & Wellness Committee that developed this draft policy. Mrs. Nadeau said she hadn't read the complete policy yet and asked if there is any reference to recess in it. MacBeth

explained that the students have a 30-minute block of time to eat lunch and go outside if they wish. This is done at most of the elementary schools in the district. Discussion took place about the increase in instructional minutes required by the state, leaving less time for recess without extending the school day. Mr. Auclair said he sent out the policy draft a couple weeks ago to get feedback and the two main areas that were questioned were fundraising and school concessions. There was concern that the policy will limit the ability to do candy fundraisers and that the concessions will be limited to selling water and juice. Whether or not to allow groups to bring requests for waivers to the superintendent was discussed. Some groups may be locked into contracts with vendors already. Dr. Macera said that it is state law and certain items are not allowed on school property, possibly to the point of not allowing staff to bring these items in their lunches. MacBeth said the only waivers that might be required would be for teachers that have booked their fundraisers for next year already. Auclair noted that our policy is stricter than the state law right now and spoke about the classroom rewards teachers have used such as McDonald's Happy Meals and candy. He asked Dr. Macera if this policy seems to be something she would be able to implement. "Many of our children are obese, so we have to do better," she said. Auclair thanked everyone involved in helping to develop this policy. Mr. Dubois thanked Ms. MacBeth and Mr. Auclair for all their hard work, saying, "It's time, but it seems so drastic all at once." He asked if sports teams would be allowed to drink Gatorade. MacBeth said that there's water as an alternative and it has been shown to be better than Gatorade. Dubois asked Atty. Ackerman if Dr. Macera or a designee would be able to decide if a fundraiser can be waived if this policy is passed. "It's school policy and you can amend it anytime," he said. Ms. Williams spoke about recess and the fact that not all students participate in physical activity. MacBeth explained that there's no distinction between health education and physical activity that is required by the state for the 100 minutes per week per student. "It's not enough. Other states have longer school days," said Macera. Williams spoke about the population we have in Woonsocket and that they don't shop at Whole Foods. "It's much more expensive to buy healthy foods than it is to eat junk. I am an advocate for healthy eating, but you have to take into consideration the population we are dealing with. We need to educate the parents. Maybe have some cooking classes," said Williams. Forcier had a parent ask about the policy and said she sent her child to school with a Lil' Debbie snack and she was told that her child couldn't bring that to school anymore. MacBeth told her that we couldn't stop a parent from sending a certain snack with their child. "Many of our students collect food stamps and that provides \$3.00 a day for food. Until we change a lot, we are not going to see this problem go away," said Forcier.

Motion to approve with the stipulation that if we are locked into any contracts, Dr. Macera will be able to waive the policy: A. Auclair
2nd: M. Dubois
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. **Motion passed.**

2. Approval of McDougall-Littell English Textbooks Pilot for WHS – L. Filomeno/K. Karten

Karen Karten explained that nine teachers will receive a stipend from McDougall-Littell of \$500 each, along with a \$250 gift certificate to try the McDougall-Littell Literature for Grades 7 and 10. It's a literature program that includes a text. "If we decide to use this program, what would be the cost then?" asked Williams. Linda Filomeno said it would be expensive. "It's vendors trying to sell a product. They acquire research for their promotions, etc. It's an advertising ploy. Right now, we don't have the money for a significant textbook purchase, but we will be able to keep the materials that do come in," said Filomeno. Karten said that a new literature series is needed at the WHS. "If we like it, we could consider writing a grant to obtain the books. They are a very reputable company and have been in business for many years. All the teachers agreed to use this program. They have all looked at it. It's a pilot until January of 2008," said Karten. Mr. Auclair was concerned about the 7th graders having to shift their curriculum mid-year. "Have we really thought this out? I want to make sure we aren't disrupting the academic flow for the 7th graders," he said. Karten said we could continue it until June of 2008 because the materials will be ours. Auclair asked if the Commissioner needed to approve of this for the WMS. "I think we need to get a more generic understanding of curriculum. This program is aligned with the GLEs. I believe the vendors have to seek approval from the state to even approach districts to run their pilots," said Macera. Auclair suggested that something be sent home at the beginning of the year notifying the parents that their children will be in this pilot. Filomeno said they would come before the WSC if they want to extend the program until the end of the school year. Also, if the program has gone well and they want to look at applying for grant to get this material, they will come before the WSC for approval.

Motion to approve: A. Forcier
Roll Call Vote: 4 yes, 1 no—AF
2nd: M. Williams
Motion passed.

3. Approval of Parent Involvement Policy P8-3.4 – 2nd Passage – L. Filomeno

Filomeno noted that no changes had been made since the first passage.

Motion to approve: M. Williams
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. Motion passed.
2nd: M. Dubois

4. Approval of Agreement for RIC School Psychology Internship Consortium – C. Lerner

Mrs. Lerner said that Rhode Island College approached us with an opportunity to have two psychology interns work with us at a nominal fee. We could have them for up to three years each. Their salary would be funded by IDEA at a cost of \$60,000 for three years for the two interns. They would be working under Dr. Guevremont.

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

2nd: M. Williams

5. Approval of Agreement for Rehabilitation Hospital of RI – C. Lerner

Lerner explained that the district has had a shortage of occupational therapists and has had to go out into the community to provide services. This agreement would be in effect for the summer months. Most of the therapists have opted not to work during the summer. These services are reimbursable through Medicaid at 53%.

Motion to approve: A. Auclair
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. Motion passed.

2nd: A. Forcier

6. Approval of Cyber Bullying Policy P2-21.1A – 1st Passage – J. Gallishaw

Jonathan Gallishaw stated that 80% of children in Grades 5 through 12 are online for at least an hour a week. "Our Technology Committee investigated the topic of cyber bullying and cyber stalking and have integrated it into our Technology Policy. We are leading the charge to address this issue," said Gallishaw. He explained what it is and read the addition to the policy. Mr. Auclair asked Gallishaw if he had asked Atty. Ackerman to review the policy. Gallishaw hadn't done so, but said that he could. Auclair mentioned that the School Safety Plan may need to be revised now as well. Ms. Williams was in favor of this policy, but wanted to know how we are going to track whether material originated at home or at school. "It will be difficult. The policy defines what it is and it has been made general for a purpose," said Gallishaw. Dr. Macera said we had a number of incidents this year that included bullying via electronic devices, which resulted in an altercation at school. "The definition is so broad because it's so hard to get the proof. Another con is whether or not it's an invasion of privacy," said Gallishaw. "It's always going to be a gray area when it comes to things happening off-campus. It may have to be proven in court. Where does the schools jurisdiction end?" noted Ackerman. Mr. Dubois thought we were trying to encompass a lot of things that shouldn't be the school department's responsibility. "I will support this, but how far do we want to go?" asked Dubois. Ackerman asked if the ACLU had weighed in on this policy yet. Gallishaw said, "No, but they requested a copy." "I am very pleased to be able to make this addition to the handbook. At least we are starting a dialogue on this issue. We will be bringing awareness to this. When it comes to students doing something out of school, if they are participating in a school event, the school has authority," said Macera. Auclair requested that Atty. Ackerman review this policy before it comes back for second passage.

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

2nd: A. Auclair

7. Approval of Change of Graduation Date School Calendar 2007-08 – J. Gallishaw

Gallishaw noted that the graduation date should have been June 13th instead of the 6th.

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

2nd: A. Auclair

8. Approval of Elementary Handbook – 1st Passage – M. Tincknell

Linda Filomeno represented Mrs. Tincknell on this item and noted any changes that had been made. Mr. Auclair noted that there were some pages at the end that shouldn't be there.

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

2nd: M. Williams

9. Approval of WMS/WHS Handbook – 1st Passage – P. McGee/ G. Nasuti, C. Henderson

WMS Handbook: Dr. McGee noted any changes that have been made since last year. **Dr. Macera made an addition to Page 5 under the Academic Placement: #6) Parent Input.**

Ms. Williams asked why we don't have a cluster of accelerated classes—one class for each of the core subjects of Math, Science, English and Social Studies. Dr. Macera said that may be considered tracking by the state. "We would have to get advice and consent from the Commissioner because we are in corrective action. Mr. Auclair doesn't agree with the academic placement situation. He prefers that in the future, the WSC doesn't have to pass handbooks twice. "If it's taken from the policy manual and put into the handbook, why do we need to pass it again? We have already passed these things as policies. If it reflects the district's policies, it shouldn't come before us again," said Auclair. Dr. Macera agreed that the handbooks are merely a conveyance of information. She doesn't have a problem with them only requiring one passage. In a meeting with the Commissioner, he said he has authority over a school in corrective action. "Federal law prohibits tracking, and we receive a large amount of federal money," said Macera. Auclair said that there should be one policy manual for the district in a central location. Macera told him that she doesn't have the staff to collaborate and coordinate all the handbooks and policies into one policy manual. "It absolutely needs to be done, however," she added. Auclair said he will be working on comparing our policies to the handbooks because it is important to him.

"Every year I look at things such as dress code. We know that kids come to school improperly dressed. They come to school with cell phones. A policy is only as good as the implementation of it. I would like to see that at the start of school, students are made aware of the regulations because they have been getting away with these violations," said Nadeau. "I couldn't agree with you more. A policy is only good as long as the teachers and staff enforce it. We have to be very diligent," said Macera. Dr. McGee said they go over the rules at the beginning of the school year with the students. Nadeau thinks parents should be called when kids are sent to school improperly dressed—not just give them a T-shirt. Dr. McGee thinks they are working very hard to implement the regulations in the handbook. Dr. Macera agreed that the parents should be called. She needs the support of the WSC on this because they will get complaints. "What happened to us making some sort of uniform policy at the WMS?" asked Williams. Dr. Macera told her that state policy forbids us from promoting it. "It has to come from the parents. If the parents do a drive and fund it voluntarily, we can get around the law. We cannot mandate that students wear uniforms, because I would move to do it," said Macera. Mr. Auclair asked what the difference is from having a uniform policy and crafting a dress code that prohibits many other things, such as jeans. "They would still have some freedom to choose," he argued. "What do you do with families at a shelter or children in group homes? When you have uniforms, provisions are made for these children," maintained Macera. Mr. Dubois said he has seen the dress code regulation strictly enforced at the beginning of the year, but it starts to get very lax by the middle and towards the end of the year. "I haven't seen anything about boys with low pants and underwear showing. It needs to be consistently enforced," said Dubois. Mr. McGee will make sure that low pants and underwear showing is covered in the handbook.

Motion to approve the WMS Handbook with the addition to Academic Placement that Dr. Macera made: A. Forcier **2nd: M. Dubois**

Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. Motion Passed.

WHS Handbook: Carnell Henderson reviewed the items that had been added since last year, such as: PBGR Policy, ID Policy, ISS, FACTS & FOCUS Programs, VLA, and an updated health services section. They would like to continue with the tardiness policy that was piloted during the 4th quarter. It has been included in the handbook now, but the WSC would have to approve continuing the policy. There was a 50% improvement in the number of tardies since the new policy was instituted. The cyber bullying and parent involvement policies would have to be added, as well as the school start time.

Motion to approve the WHS Handbook: A. Forcier

2nd: E. Nadeau

Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. Motion passed.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Macera mentioned that she had a meeting with the PAC to discuss strategies for the impending bond referendum. She will be in touch with each WSC member also. They want to go into the housing projects. "We are planning an informational meeting for July 11th at the WMS. It will be the first of many. The parents are being very supportive. We have a very short window of time to get this done and I want to make sure everything we do is within the parameters of the law. I can just present the facts and not advocate one way or the other." Dr. Macera thanked the parent group for all their help.

Motion to receive and place on file: M. Williams

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD AND WELFARE:

Dubois: Wanted to make sure that while they are out campaigning for the middle school, if there are three or more WSC members present, does it violate the open meetings law if questions are asked about school issues. Atty. Ackerman will look into it. Ackerman thought, to be safe, to limit it to two members at any event they are campaigning at. Interviews are being held for principal of the WHS. Three are scheduled for July 10th and one was

held yesterday. He asked Mrs. Forcier or Mr. Auclair if they would be available to participate in any of the interviews. Dubois asked Dr. Macera if they could have an update on the cost analysis of the universal breakfast. Congratulated the WHS graduates. Thanked John Brien and Ms. Baldelli-Hunt for their help in getting approval of the reimbursement for the entire \$74 million for the school bond issue. It's on the ballot for August 14th. He suggested holding an Open House at the current middle school so people can see that building.

Forcier: Said that her son is doing okay. She found out that her family is being attacked on the Larry Poitras' Talk Show, adding that she supposes she should expect that sort of thing being a public official. Forcier said she will find out more about it tomorrow. She spoke about professional development for school committees, saying she would be willing to take a decrease in pay to allow them to be part of RIASC. "I think \$5,000 a year is more than enough."

Nadeau: She asked if the July 18th meeting will be a business meeting. Dubois told her "yes" since it's the only meeting that month. "It's not official that we will be going to the one business and one conference meeting per month," said Dubois. Nadeau asked Dr. Macera what was going on with our budget. Dr. Macera and Miriam Goodman have had discussions with Mr. Strom and they were "comfortable". "Mrs. Goodman is on vacation this week. With 0% increase in funding from the state, we are \$3.4 million short. We are going to try to use \$500,000 from our capital budget allocation. We are looking at other cost savings by bringing more students back from out-of-district placements. Fifteen teacher assistants are affected out of 130. We need further assistance from the city in order to stabilize the budget. I need to have a meeting with the Mayor. Every school district is facing multi-million dollar issues," said Macera.

Williams: The only thing she has been hearing out in the community about the bond issue is the outstanding lawsuits. "I think those questions need to be addressed before we can go forward because it's going to come up and we need answers to give them. I will definitely check with the presidents of the social clubs so we can coordinate dates." She agreed with Mr. Auclair as far as not throwing money at the education issues. "Everyone talks about the unions and their increases and benefits, but no one ever talks about administrative salaries. I guess it's because they aren't in a union. The buck needs to stop somewhere. I will give my \$6,000 back to the WED. I don't need it. Can we all say we will give up 3% for our children? We won't because people are selfish and want to get ahead."

Auclair: He sent a letter to RIASC regarding changing the culture statewide from one of entitlement to one of performance. It was in the commentary section of The Call today. He thinks we should see how much it costs the WED to maintain the city's buildings. Dr. Macera said that when we changed the program design for Blue Cross, we budgeted 8%; and because of the staff utilization of the new policy, our increase is 0% for next year. "That's \$800,000 in savings. RI is 47th in the nation for state funding for education." She would be very happy to do a cost analysis regarding maintenance of the school buildings, including staff costs. Auclair asked Atty. Ackerman what actions the WED needs to make if we are in a deficit. "Everyone on the committee is aware of what actions need to be taken as a committee. In terms of the handbook, why is it that we approve student handbooks and not staff handbooks?" he asked.

Motion to adjourn at 10:20 p.m.: M. Williams

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle
WSC Recording Secretary