

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2009
7:00 PM – OPEN SESSION
Woonsocket Area Career & Technical Center
Multimedia Room 303

Call to Order / Moment of Silence / Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:	Marc Dubois, Chairman	Present
	Eleanor Nadeau, Vice Chairwoman	Present
	Linda Majewski	Present
	Anita McGuire-Forcier	Present
	Vimala Phongsavanh	Present

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Darlene McGaw, Family Resources Community Action: Wanted to clarify the remarks she made at the last meeting regarding the work they have done with the Parents Advisory Council. “The success of the Open House was singularly the result of the hard work of the PAC. We also want to recognize the role that the PAC played in helping get the bond referendum passed for the new middle schools.” Dr. Gerardi thanked Darlene for the good they have done.

Richard DiPardo, 134 Huntington Avenue, WTG President: Spoke regarding concerns he had about Item #4 under New Business: “Race to the Top Grant- Memorandum of Understanding”. He had spent the morning up at the Dept. of Education with Dr. Gerardi and some school committee members and RIDE representatives tried to explain this thing to them. “We are being asked to sign a Memo of Agreement that we haven’t seen yet. I don’t sign anything unless I know what I am signing. Things that were supposed to be available to us today were not because RIDE’s lawyers had to go over them. Well, we have lawyers too and we should have the same opportunity!” Mrs. Nadeau said that after this meeting, Dr. Gerardi asked that the representatives from RIDE not come to tonight’s meeting because they weren’t ready with the paperwork for us to see. “It will be shown to us and then we can proceed with our questions,” said Nadeau.

Marlene Smith, WHS Teacher: Said she was very happy that the “Race to the Top – MOA” is being postponed. She raised concerns about this initiative and read excerpts from different articles she has come across. Smith recalled other initiatives that have gone by the wayside, such as an 11-page report card with NCLB and heterogeneous grouping. Dr. Gerardi told her that he appreciated her candor and agreed with some of her comments.

Paul Niles, Lydia Avenue: Asked the committee why there wasn’t a one-hour delay for school opening last Wednesday during the snow storm. Mr. Dubois explained that sometimes it’s a no-win situation. “Everyone used to confer at 4:30 a.m. in the morning.” Dr. Gerardi explained that they have a phone-tree and conference on the phone. “We were relying on the weathermen. Students are considered safer when they are at home or at school. The rain/snow line had turned over several times. We wanted to get the kids in when it was snowing because it’s safer to drive in the snow than in the rain, believe it or not. There are more accidents in the rain,” said Gerardi. “We have staff that travel long distances. How safe is it for them to travel? How difficult will it be for them? It’s not only the students’ safety—it’s staff safety,” said Nadeau. Dr. Gerardi pointed out that we have a real good staff that will cover for others who might be late.

Bill Legare, Valley Transportation: He asked some questions about the Kendrick Avenue footbridge and whether it will be open when the new middle schools open. Mrs. Forcier said that it will be open. Legare brought forward recommendations he had regarding the impact it might have on the bussing with the new middle schools opening and the possibility of flip-flopping the times to accommodate the busses having to go to two schools. Dr. Gerardi said there has been talk about changing the time schedule.

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Gerardi congratulated the Woonsocket Villa Novan’s Football Team for winning the Division II Super Bowl, adding that it was an exciting game to watch. He recognized Coach Henderson for an excellent year, and the entire coaching staff and players for their outstanding efforts all year. He also recognized Travis Gagne for being named Most Valuable Player. Coach Henderson thanked Dr. Gerardi, Chairman Dubois and Mr. Garceau for allowing him to

continue coaching this year. He had his two team captains with him, but Travis Gagne was at an awards banquet and couldn't be here. Coach Henderson thanked the community for their support throughout the season and thanked the group of young men he had a chance to work with.

On behalf of Principal Donna Coderre of Governor Pothier School and himself, Gerardi recognized and thanked the Woonsocket Elks Club for their recent donation of 91 brand new coats, hats, gloves, and scarves to students at the school. The Lodge also gave the kids and their families a fun-filled day of holiday music, a visit from Santa, Shriners Clowns and lunch. Raffles were held and a bicycle was won and many other toys. The Elks Club also has adopted 60 children from Pothier for Christmas. On behalf of Principal Tom Hazard of Coleman Elementary School, he reported that on December 4th, the entire Coleman Elementary School attended "Scrooge the Musical" at the Stadium Theater. The money was raised from a whole group effort between the community, students and staff. The event was paid for by a matching donation from Alan Shawn Feinstein through a food drive and a monetary donation from the Woonsocket Rotary Club, and a corporate sponsorship from the Customer Relations Department at CVS. Principal Hazard felt it was important to share this information because it shows how forming partnerships within the community can truly benefit our school children. Gerardi recognized everyone involved for their continued support. On behalf of Assistant Principal Ron Celio of Fifth of Avenue School, Gerardi was asked to recognize the faculty members of Fifth Avenue School for volunteering their time at their H1N1 flu clinic on Tuesday, December 8th, which helped to make it a phenomenal success. Dr. Gerardi and Peter Fontaine wanted further recognized all of the administrators, nurses, staff, students and families that attended each of the H1N1 clinics. Peter was told by Health Department employees that Woonsocket had the best organized and run clinics across the whole state. They even recommended that principals from other communities attend our clinics in preparation of their own.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: 11/18/09 OPEN/CLOSED; 12/2/09 OPEN/CLOSED

Motion to approve: M. Dubois

2nd: M. Williams (Unanimously Approved)

Mrs. Forcier had additions to her comments on the 12/2/09 minutes regarding the Closed Session for the Superintendent's Contract. Mrs. Majewski had corrections on the 11/18/09 Open Session under New Business #1 regarding Allstate Voluntary Benefits program. She also had corrections on the 12/2/09 minutes under New Business #1 for Discussion/Approval of new positions funded by ARRA.

VOTE TO APPROVE MINUTES W/ CORRECTIONS: A. Forcier

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion to approve Consent Agenda with the following exemptions: M. Dubois

**Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000 – Barnes & Noble, Lakeshore Learning Materials, Dome Construction, Keystone Info Systems, Lowes, and Scholastic removed by LM*

2nd: E. Nadeau/V. Phongsavanh (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Personnel Actions

Certified Appointments/Non-Certified Appointments

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

Judith Keeley/Consultant/Prof. Develop./Title I AARA Grant

Nettie Alexander/Consultant/Prof. Develop./Title I AARA Grant

Apple laptops/WMS– Grant E2t2

Barnes & Noble/Education Materials/Harris/Title I School Improvement Grant – Removed by LM

CDI/Computers/WHS/Tech Inv. Funds

Lakeshore Learning Materials/Ed Materials/Bernon/Title I School Impr. Grant – Removed by LM

Dell Computers/Keystone & Sodexo Servers, Laptops/Business Office/TIF

Dome Construction Co./Roof Repairs/WACTC/Local – Removed by LM

Keystone Info Systems/Financial Software/Bus. Office Local – Removed by LM

AppleDesktops/ElementarySchools/TIF

Lowes/Construction Materials/WACTC/Perkins Grant – Removed by LM

Scholastic/Ed. Mat/Bernon/Citizens/Title I School Impr. Grant – Removed by LM

CONSENT AGEND (CONTINUED)

3. Field Trip/Conference Requests

NEASC Conference, Boston, MA/Professional Development/WHS/Title II
Encaustic: Painting & Sculpture Class/Maine College, Portland, ME/M. St. Charles/ Title II

4. Home Schooling Requests

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:

2) Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000:

- ***Barnes & Noble for Education Materials at Harris School: \$16,931.50 Title I School Impr. Grant***
- ***Lakeshore Learning Materials--Ed Materials at Bernon: \$ 5,030.88 Title I School Impr. Grant***
- ***Scholastic for Ed. Materials at Bernon & Citizens: \$16,498.34 Title I School Impr. Grant***

Mrs. Majewski asked if the School Improvement Grant money is included yet. Linda Filomeno and Dr. Gerardi said it was an old grant and explained. The money being used is last year's School Improvement Grant.

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- ***Dome Construction Co. for Roof Repairs at WACTC: \$ 2,123.00 Local***

Mrs. Majewski explained that the State will be reimbursing us for these repairs and asked if it will be guaranteed. Mrs. Busby will check on that. Mr. Dubois explained that we have to pay up front and then get reimbursed by the State.

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- ***Keystone Info Systems for Financial Software in the Business Office: \$21,850.00 Local***

Mrs. Majewski asked if this was part of the new chart of accounts. Mrs. Busby told her it was and explained further.

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- ***Lowes for Construction Materials at the WACTC: \$12,463.45 Perkins Grant***

Mrs. Nadeau said that the Building Committee met and a shed will be built for the new middle school yard equipment by the students in the Construction Program at the WACTC. The program had been looking for a project to do. It will be built at the WACTC over the winter and the school department only has to pay for the materials and to have it moved to the site.

Dr. Gerardi noted that the purchase from CDI for computers at the WHS was made in collaboration with the Northern RI Collaborative and we received a significant discount.

Motion to approve the exemptions: A. Forcier 2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

COMMUNICATIONS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: The WSC Subcommittee Assignments were announced by Mr. Dubois. They are as follows:

Building: Forcier & Nadeau
Facilities/Planning: Forcier & Phongsavanh
Finance: Dubois & Nadeau
Food Service: Phongsavanh
Health & Wellness: Phongsavanh
Legislative: Dubois & Forcier
Literacy: Dubois
Minority Concerns: Dubois & Phongsavanh
PAC (PTO) Liaison: Majewski
Personnel/Contracts: Majewski
Policy: Majewski & Nadeau

Recognitions: Nadeau
School Safety: Dubois & Forcier
SELAC – Special Needs: Majewski
Sick Bank: Dubois
Planning/Instructional Curriculum: Majewski & Phongsavanh
Technology: Forcier & Phongsavanh
Transportation: Forcier
Uniform: Majewski & Nadeau
WACTC: Forcier

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

1. Fair Funding Coalition - Steve Robinson, Esquire

Atty. Robinson recalled that 15 years ago during the credit union crisis, Gov. Sundlun decided to cut 10% of state aid to cities and towns. "The poorer communities received a substantial part of their budget from the state. Gov. Carcier is talking about cutting 3% now in state aid." He noted that for Jamestown, that amounts to \$12,000. For Woonsocket, that amounts to \$1.3 million. Fifteen years ago he was the attorney who fought the state on behalf of those communities. "Dr. Kelleher, superintendent of Woonsocket at the time, gave testimony about how the history textbooks that WHS students were using ended with, "and some day we hope to see a man walk on the moon". We ultimately lost that case. There was such uproar as a result of this that more money was pushed into the poor districts for the next few years. But the formula hasn't changed. It's not equitable," said Robinson. He was before the WSC asking for authorization to sue the state of RI asking for a fair funding formula. He said there's a false formula being presented out there and explained how it would work. "Woonsocket took this leadership role 15 years ago and I am urging you to do so again," he said. Robinson is hoping that other communities will join Woonsocket in this lawsuit. "Someone needs to be the first. Advocacy for all students is the civil rights movement of today. I'm asking for passage of a resolution. It's my sincere opinion that whether we win or lose, Woonsocket would significantly benefit." Robinson has proposed a rate (\$10 per student) that would be the same for the next two years. He anticipates the case being resolved within that time frame. Mrs. Nadeau said she will support this proposal. She doesn't think that history has proven that we can rely on the General Assembly in any way. Mrs. Forcier spoke about the "hold harmless bill" and that it's not good. "Don't believe the politicians when they say it's good," she said. Mr. Dubois supports the resolution. Forcier added that John Ward and Leo Fontaine both support it also (not financially, but morally).

Motion to approve the filing of the fair funding resolution by Atty. Robinson: A. Forcier 2 nd : E. Nadeau	Roll Call Vote: 5 yes. APPROVED
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Mr. Dubois said, "We have been the first to have e-Learning and school uniforms, and we will be first to initiate this lawsuit."

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discussion/Approval of School Committee Policy on Staff-Student Fraternization Policy- A. McGuire/Forcier

Mrs. Forcier stated that we have had instances where teachers have crossed the line with students, but we are the adults and should act like adults. She wanted to see if we can add the policy that Westerly uses. Mr. Dubois asked Atty. Ackerman what he thought of it. Ackerman said there were some generalizations, but it should have the effect of discouraging these activities. Mrs. Forcier suggested that it be read to students in advisory period. Dr. Gerardi will talk to the union about it, noting that there is a sexual harassment policy in the handbook. Mrs. Majewski believes it addresses this issue. Mr. Dubois wasn't comfortable having teachers read this out loud in the classroom.

Motion to approve with the addition of "boundary invasion" under Prohibited Behavior and insertion of Woonsocket in place of Westerly: A. Forcier	2 nd : E. Nadeau
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes.	APPROVED.

2. Discussion/Approval of RI Educator Code of Professional Responsibility- R. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi reported that the RI Board of Regents recently approved the RI Educator Code of Professional Responsibility, which was included in the WSC packets. As a result of the Board of Regents adoption, all RI teachers are bound by the principals in this document. It was his understanding that in the past, the school committee approved the 14 Principles of Professionalism for teachers. While he believes that those 14 points were a good guide for that time, the RI Educator Code of Professional Responsibility appears to provide a more in-depth understanding of the expectations that we should all agree are appropriate. He recommended that the school committee vote to eliminate the policy in regard to the 14 Principals of Professionalism and adopt the RI Educator Code of Professional Responsibility. "We need to see those – the 14 Points of Professionalism -- to compare these to. I haven't seen them in years and they haven't been followed in many instances," said Mrs. Nadeau. Mrs. Filomeno said there's a hard copy of it in the Strategic Design PowerPoint Page. Dr. Gerardi said he couldn't find

anything other than a plaque with 14 words on it. "That's where the whole thing was broken out. That's all that exists of them. They were developed by Dr. Spadey, Dr. Macera and a committee and adopted before I came here. Prior to that, it was a policy for teachers and administrators, but never was for the school committee. Dr. Macera was requesting that it be adopted for the school committee. The school committee at that time didn't feel they needed it because they were already held to higher code of ethics," said Filomeno. "We were told that everyone was doing this, but they weren't. It was used to target certain people. That's why I am very leery about all of these things," said Mrs. Nadeau. Mrs. Majewski asked if Commissioner Gist is asking that the school districts adopt this. Dr. Gerardi told her that the Board of Regents has already adopted it.

Motion to approve: A. Forcier	2 nd : M. Dubois
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes.	APPROVED.

3. Discussion of Educator Evaluation System Standards- R. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi explained that as part of Commissioner Gist's strategic plan, ensuring educator excellence is her first priority. He included the Educator Evaluation System Standards that were recently approved by the RI Board of Regents in the WSC's packets for their review. He explained that these standards were designed to describe what the state expects in an evaluation system for school employees. The expectations in this document are much more comprehensive than any evaluation programs that he was familiar with in his 22 years of experience in education. For many districts, these standards will require significant costs and manpower to develop and implement. Gerardi announced that in a collaborative effort with the WTG and the school communities of Pawtucket, Central Falls and Providence, we are joint participants in the \$250,000 AFT grant that is funding the planning and development of a "Gold Standard" evaluation system for our districts. He said we are fortunate that we are participating in this grant so that we could afford to reach the expectations that the RI Board of Regents are requiring. Also, our district is better prepared to participate in the Race to the Top grant application than most other districts because of this initiative.

"If we are getting the funds from the AFT, who has input into these standards?" asked Mrs. Nadeau. Dr. Gerardi discussed the groups of people who are represented, which included teachers, administrators, union members, etc. Mrs. Majewski questioned Item #4 under Standard 4 and asked, "Will this eliminate tenure?" "No. It doesn't address tenure," said Gerardi. Majewski referred to Item #3 under Standard 1 regarding the sentence, **An educator's overall evaluation of effectiveness is primarily determined by evidence of impact on student growth and academic achievement**, and expressed her concerns about teachers being held responsible for student achievement in such a transient community. She felt it puts more stress on teachers. Dr. Gerardi noted that this item was just on the agenda for discussion. "Because the Board of Regents passed it, we are bound by it anyway," said Gerardi. "The problem is that the people who develop these standards aren't in the trenches like the teachers are or the standards would be more realistic. They think that everyone will fit into a certain mold and some people don't fit into that mold," said Mrs. Nadeau.

4. Discussion/Approval of RIDE "Race to the Top Grant- MOU" –R. Gerardi, RIDE Representative

Dr. Gerardi reported that Commissioner Gist invited Superintendents from six districts, including Woonsocket, to RIDE to discuss the Race to the Top Grant last week; and at the WED's urging, another meeting was held today with union leadership and school committee representation. Mr. Dipardo, Mrs. McGuire Forcier and Dr. Gerardi attended today's meeting. It was explained that the federal government has set aside a huge amount of money in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to fund approximately five states who are leading the nation in educational initiatives. The commissioner stated that she expects the RI Grant application to be somewhere around \$100,000,000 to \$120,000,000. Rhode Island is actually considered a strong contender because of our New England Comprehensive Assessment Program (NECAP), which has led the way toward a national common core of standards and our new High School and Middle School Graduation Requirements which created the PBGR's. When Dr. Gerardi met with the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education at a Harvard Superintendents Round Table, he expressed his envy for our graduation requirements and his concern that RI will be a stronger candidate for the Race to the Top Funds because of those PBGR's. Also, Mary Ann Snider expressed to Dr. Gerardi that she and other RIDE officials were invited to Washington DC by the Aspen Institute because they believe that Rhode Island is one of the strong contenders for this grant. Dr. Gerardi is confident that this is a worthwhile venture for our district. He takes great pride in the number and quantity of grants that he has written over the years. His biggest challenge in writing grants has always been finding the grant recipients who can make the best use of the funding provided by the funder. The commissioner believes that Woonsocket is one of the six districts that can best utilize a large portion of that money. If RIDE is awarded the Race to the Top grant, one half of the \$100,000,000 will be used to benefit all schools in the state of RI. In the packets the WSC received from RIDE, they will see on Page 4 that those districts are called **"Involved" districts**. The other \$50,000,000 will be divided proportionately among the participating districts of which only eight districts will potentially be included. The Commissioner explained that of those eight districts, the money

will be proportionally released based on Title I allocations. We are one of the four largest Title I districts in that pool of eight; and, therefore, would get the lion's share of those funds. If less than eight of those communities chose to participate, then our share would increase proportionally. RI is a strong contender for this \$100,000,000 grant and Woonsocket is a strong contender for a good portion of \$50,000,000 of that grant.

Dr. Gerardi explained also that with every grant comes requirements on how the funder, in this case the US Department of Education, wants the money spent. The Commissioner is very astute in her understanding of the expectations of the US Department of Education and she has presented what she thinks the US Department of Education will want us to spend the money on. Unfortunately, the US department of Education has short-dated the application process for January 19th for the first round which has put RIDE under tight time constraints. The RIDE wanted finalized MOU's signed by the School Committee Chair, the Superintendent, and the Union President from each participating district by January 8, 2008. Unfortunately, they did not have a draft available, and they were hopeful that they could get us one by Friday and the actual grant will be ready by December 12th for focus groups to view. Everyone agreed that we should wait until we see the Memorandum of Understanding before agreeing to it; and, therefore, Dr. Gerardi recommended that the school committee vote to authorize Chairman Dubois to sign the MOU on behalf of the School Committee after RIDE provides the school committee with a special workshop meeting on Wednesday January 6th. Although they asked Mary Ann Snider to come to this meeting to help answer any questions people may have, the school committee members and Dr. Gerardi felt that they could answer most of the questions tonight and that she could come back for the special workshop.

The WSC members unanimously agreed to having a workshop with RIDE on this issue. Mrs. Forcier said we have a 90-day opt-out of this if we don't think it's a good idea, but she doesn't think we have a choice.

CONFERENCES: *NECAP PRESENTATION – S. Ryan*

Ms. Ryan gave a PowerPoint presentation on the NECAP results for Science, which was given to students in Grades 4, 8 and 11. She gave the results by grade and by school and noted the percentage of improvement. Graphs also showed where Woonsocket stands in relation to other communities with its results. Mr. John McLaughlin asked if the PowerPoint is available to the public. Ms. Ryan said that it can be. McLaughlin questioned the fact that many students are still not proficient, the way he interprets the figures. Dr. Gerardi explained that we have set the bar high and we have made improvement. "We still did better than some of the other urban districts," said Gerardi. Mrs. Forcier asked if this information was available on the RIDE website. Ryan said that it is. Mrs. Majewski asked if the Physics First program has helped with the test scores. Dr. Gerardi confirmed that we have an award-winning Science staff and he also hopes that the Physics First program is part of this improvement in scores. He also discussed the block schedule and that they are looking at an A/B Block schedule instead of a 4 x 4 Block schedule.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: *Dr. Gerardi*

Gerardi announced that the annual holiday concert at the WHS will be held on Thursday, December 17th at 7:00 p.m. and will feature all of the 150 performing WHS students in the music department, with holiday selections performed by the chorus, concert band, jazz band, and select choir, with special performances by a vocal duet and percussion ensembles. He also extended his best wishes for a wonderful and relaxing holiday break.

Motion to receive and place on file: L. Majewski

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

M. Dubois: Congratulated the WHS Football Team on their winning the championship. He remembered that they were here three months ago about allowing Coach Henderson to continue coaching after he was appointed to a new administrative position. He congratulated Coach Henderson also.

L. Majewski: She congratulated the football team. "The only sad thing was that the game was on the WSC's inauguration night and we couldn't go to the whole game." Wished everyone happy holidays.

A. Forcier: Congratulated the football team. "Coach Henderson is doing a wonderful job with the players. They are doing better with their grades also. He has proven he can do both." Forcier spoke about being unable to switch the times for the high school and middle schools because the high school students beat up the middle school students. "It used to happen when I was in school." She also passed out a couple of copies of superintendent evaluations to review for use as templates. "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!"

E. Nadeau: "Merry Christmas and a Happy, Health New Year!"

V. Phongsavanh: Thanked everyone for being here and said she is excited to be on the committee. Congratulated the football team and wished everyone a happy holiday.

Motion to adjourn at 9:45 p.m.: L. Majewski

2nd: A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary