

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 2010
7:15 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:

Representative of Family Resources Community Action: Announced that the School Success Coalition will hold its next meeting on June 3rd at 4:30 p.m. at 245 Main Street, Woonsocket. They will be goal setting for next year. A second meeting is scheduled for Best Practices for PTOs and PTAs on June 14th at 6:30 p.m. at Harris Public Library.

Kathy Landry, home-schooled student, Woonsocket: Reported that she took an AP English course online because she was interested in seeing what public school had to offer. She signed up with Mr. Ferry and said she loved it and had a great experience. "Even though the teacher wasn't there with me, I could speak to the teacher and if I didn't understand what she said, I could re-read her response. The teacher could connect to me through an electronic thread."

Richard DiPardo, 134 Huntington Avenue, WTG President: Said he thinks it's very important for a high school to have Advanced Placement courses that are actually taught by teachers. "An online course, I am sure, has some advantages, but the interaction between the students and the teacher can be lost. It's my opinion that we should try to keep these courses live, up-close and personal. I was never bright enough to get into an AP course. However, I have heard about the conversations that go back and forth. I wonder how it would look to be the only high school around without live AP courses available."

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi commended Rathanak Chhay for being named class Valedictorian for 2010 and Alexander Kithes for being named 2010 Class Salutatorian. He noted that Rathanak has a 101.5 GPA while Alex maintains a 100.6 GPA. They both were also top students at Woonsocket Middle school and earned that school's Presidential recognition awards. Rathanak applied to Northeastern University, URI, Worcester Polytechnic, Boston University and Brown University and has been accepted at Brown University in the fall to study computer science. Alex applied to Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Boston University and chose to attend Boston University to study electrical engineering and Mathematics. Gerardi thanked and recognized Ms. Jennifer Maiello on behalf of Dr. Garcia and the staff at WHS for her steady leadership and ability to provide students, teachers, parents, and the public with opportunities to benefit from theater and arts in her most recent production of "Grease." Between 2008 and 2010, because of the qualities and humanitarian causes of her shows, Ms. Maiello raised more than \$20,000, which provided comfort and financial relief for struggling families during these times of crisis. Gerardi also recognized the staff and students who participated in "Grease", especially recognizing Mr. Ethier as one of the great saxophonists.

Gerardi recognized the families, former teachers and students, PTO members and members of the Community at Globe Park Elementary school for their opening of the sealed time capsule. He noted that former Principal Maurice Aubin began planning the 25th anniversary celebration of Globe Park in 1985 and was in attendance for the opening. Principal Rob Derosiers had the honor of opening the capsule on Friday evening, May 21st. There were many items from former students, class pictures, newspaper articles and other items from each classroom. After displaying the contents found in the capsule, the school plans to refill it with new materials and mementos for the next 25 year celebration which will be in 2035. Gerardi congratulated the Woonsocket Middle School's baseball team for their victory over Burrillville to place them in the playoffs beginning next week and wished them good luck. In track and field events, Gerardi commended Damian Pietrus, who won the 110 meter hurdles at the Class A Championship on Saturday, May 22nd. Damian won his race in a time of 15.30 seconds. The Woonsocket team took fourth place in the 4x100 meter relay with a time of 45.50 seconds. Gerardi recognized Mathew Lorwski, who placed third in shot put with a toss of 43 feet, 7 inches, and Cory Losardo, who placed fifth in the javelin finals with a throw of 126 feet 5 inches. In the girls division, Kaylynn Pitts won the long jump with a leap of 16 feet 2 inches. He wished them all

good luck at the state championship at Brown. Gerardi recognized Charlie Myers and Keith Thibeault and their students in the Construction Technology class at WACTC for recently completing a community service project for the Mount Saint Francis Health Center. Students made fifty-four “memory boxes” that will be filled with personal items and placed outside the rooms of Alzheimer’s patients. Also, students in Construction Technology attended a construction career day last week and they built a shed at the site. The Arnold Lumber Company donated the shed which has an estimated value of \$1,000 to WACTC and the instructors will hold a raffle. All proceeds will go to help defray the cost to send Skills USA gold medal winners to the national competition in Kansas City. Gerardi recognized the administration, staff, and students at Citizens Elementary for the experience he had as a guest reader today in Mrs. Sawyer’s room. He got to watch the classroom routines that occur every day because he was early and was very impressed with what he saw. Knowing a little bit about literacy instruction, during the reading of the book, he identified challenging vocabulary that they reviewed after the story. He spoke about how gratifying it was to be in a classroom and support the instruction taking place that day.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier 2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 12, 2010 OPEN/CLOSED

Motion to approve with corrections: L. Majewski 2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

On Page 5 of the Open Session, Mrs. Forcier noted that under #4) High School Graduation Requirements and Scheduling, it was Vimala who had taken the AP Courses—not her. She also noted that Providence only requires a grade of 60 or above for credit (not 16 credits).

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion to approve Consent Agenda with the following exemptions: A. Forcier

***Personnel Actions – removed by L. Majewski**

2nd: E. Nadeau

(Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Personnel Actions

Certified Appointments/Non-Certified Appointments – ***Removed by L. Majewski***

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

CBE Technologies/Equipment/Technology/Wallace Grant
East Bay Educational Collaborative/Contract Services/Spec. Ed./ARRA, Title I Grant
Robinson & Clapham/Legal Services/Business Office/Local
Woonsocket School Lunch/Official Receptions/District/DNA Grant

3. Field Trip/Conference Requests

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Rockville, MD/McFee/Funded by ASLH Association

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

EXEMPTIONS FROM CONSENT AGENDA:

1) Personnel Appointments (ALL):

Mrs. Majewski asked about the appointments to an Advisory Design Team. Dr. Gerardi explained that we received a \$40,000 grant from the Nellie Mae Foundation to have teachers work on what our advisory program will look like in the future. He said that it’s totally grant-funded. “Is this just through the end of the school year?” asked Majewski. Dr. Gerardi said it was and may include some summer work. Majewski asked about the appointment for a Cake Decorating Teacher for RIRAL Adult Education. “Why is it on for our approval if it’s through an outside agency? Isn’t the teacher a subcontractor for the agency?” asked Majewski. Dr. Gerardi and Stacey Busby weren’t sure why they were approving it, but will check into it. Majewski asked about the Virtual High School Apprentice Kindergarten Teacher appointment. Mr. Ferry explained that Virtual High School is a consortium and we have to supply a teacher

to them. "We had a teacher take this course last year. The training was half-price for this teacher and it's a popular course," explained Ferry. Dr. Gerardi added that now we have a teacher to provide this course and Mr. Ferry gets back 15 seats each semester by having our teacher teach this course. The teacher can teach kids from all over the country.

Motion to approve exemptions: V. Phongsavanh

2nd: L. Majewski (Unanimously Approved)

COMMUNICATIONS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Mrs. Majewski noted that SELAC will meet on June 3rd at 6:30 p.m. at Pothier School. There will be an in-service on 504 plans and it's open to the public. She reported that the Curriculum Committee met this week. They have a lot of work ahead of them addressing the PBGRs, homework, and attendance. The School Success Coalition will be holding its Family Matters Conference on November 6th. Majewski said that there will be something for everyone and urged the public to keep the date open.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Performance Audit- R. Gerardi

The School Committee Finance subcommittee, Attorney Ackerman, Mrs. Busby, and Dr. Gerardi met with the Mayor's staff last Thursday. The focus of the meeting was our FY10 and 11 Budgets and the RI Auditor General's Prerequisites for the City of Woonsocket to attain a Deficit Reduction Bond. One of the prerequisites requested was for the WED to agree to cooperatively participate in a performance audit for FY11 even though the budgets have not been set and there is no current Caruolo Action taking place. Gerardi was pleased that at his request, the Mayor and Finance Director Bruce agreed that he could amend the performance audit Scope of Work. Gerardi felt it was imperative to amend the scope of work to reflect the RIDE authority to mandate program and staffing decisions based on the No Child Left Behind Act, our classification as a district in progressive support and intervention, and the implementation of the New BEP. The changes in the scope of work were in the WSC packets tonight.

Dr. Gerardi asked that the WSC approve the WED participation in a FY11 performance audit subject to the amended changes.

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

2nd: L. Majewski/E. Nadeau
APPROVED

Dr. Gerardi explained that the new BEP, which is performance-based, was developed one year ago and will be implemented as of the new fiscal year. "It's not about just the number of staff anymore. It's about how well we are performing. Under the new BEP, if the students aren't achieving with ½ day kindergarten, the Commissioner can say we can have full-day kindergarten," said Gerardi. "How much would it be to reinstate all-day kindergarten," asked Mrs. Nadeau. Stacey Busby said it would cost about \$748,000. Nadeau feels that the \$606,000 that we are due from E-Rate funds should be applied to the school department – not the City. "Can they be applied to all-day kindergarten?" she asked. Dr. Gerardi believes that they could be. Nadeau asked if an amendment could be done to the amended budget. She was told "yes" and plans to add a request to bring back all-day kindergarten based on the fact that we may receive the \$606,000 in E-Rate funds and it can be supported by the new BEP. She believes that the disadvantaged students in Woonsocket need this extra support. Mrs. Forcier thinks this will confuse the parents who are working and need to make arrangements now for day care. Both Dr. Gerardi and Mr. Dubois pointed out that this topic was not on tonight's agenda for discussion.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discussion of WHS Scheduling AP Courses – V. Phongsavanh

Dr. Gerardi noted that tonight in the School Committee binders, he included the information that he was referencing in the last School Committee meeting. That information includes a chart of the students receiving college credit as a result of taking AP courses and a memo he wrote to the School Committee identifying the most current enrollment status that he had at the time and an explanation why he was requesting setting a minimum class enrollment limit. "Because we are looking at a performance audit for FY11, I am not certain that we can afford to offer classes with low enrollments of 2, 4, or even 9. However, it was never my intention to eliminate AP courses. My intention was to ask the school committee to set a reasonable minimum enrollment limit of 15 students per AP class and offer those AP classes that did not meet the minimum requirement through Virtual High School as a more cost effective method.

2010 Valedictorian Rathanak Chhay and 2010 Salutatorian Alex Kithes each spoke in support of keeping the AP Classes as they are. Tara Sennick, WHS senior, spoke as well. They said that they took an online AP course and it wasn't rigorous enough and maintained that the competitive interaction between the classmates will be lost. They presented a video showing support from teachers and students at the WHS for keeping all the AP Courses as they are, rather than having students take the lower-enrolled ones online. They were concerned about students being at a disadvantage when they apply to colleges because they lacked these courses. Mike Ferry spoke in support of the online classes, saying that the course that Alex and Rathanak took was not an AP course. He wished they would have seen him first. "We don't have enough experience with students who have taken online AP courses to say that they are not good or challenging enough. I'm disappointed in some of the comments. There is a place for Virtual High School AP Courses. We are one of the few high schools who offer it for classes with low enrollment," said Ferry. Mr. Garceau said that these online opportunities aren't about replacing people or programs. "It's about providing multiple opportunities. The intent was never to eliminate the AP program. It's about how many sections we can afford to offer. Dr. Gerardi has been asking if the WSC could set a minimum enrollment for a course to run, especially if we are going to have a performance audit," said Garceau. Dr. Gerardi added that we have been commended regionally for our online programs. "Everyone is comfortable with what they know. Things are changing and we are changing with them. We have to make a decision tonight because scheduling is way overdue. We have a lot of teachers still on lay-off status and this affects the number of teachers at the high school," said Gerardi.

Mrs. Forcier thanked the students for their presentation and thanked Alex for his passion. "I can't justify any class with such low numbers. I could never support running a class with three students," she said. Mrs. Majewski asked about the feasibility of having IDEA funds cover that cost of some of these courses. Mr. Garceau researched it with RIDE and they told him there is no provision for that. Mrs. Majewski agreed with the students that they compete with each other in the class. "They aren't always with other students who want to learn at that level and it's stimulating. You might not get that from an online course," she said. Majewski repeated many of the points that the AP students made during their presentation. "If this is about saving the salaries of 1½ teachers, why don't we just give 1/3 of our courses online and save all kinds of money in teaching positions? We care so much about the students that are at a disadvantage, yet we deprive those students that are excellent who want to be challenged from opportunities," said Majewski. "If the limit is set at 10, three of the five courses will run. We are hoping to set some class size that you can live with," said Gerardi. Ms. Phongsavanh thought that a class minimum of 10 is a good number. "Do you think you can recruit ten kids for these classes?" she asked Alex. Alex asked Dr. Gerardi about the possibility of holding an assembly and he was told no. Dr. Gerardi said that he is open to something, but he is not sure an assembly is a way to do it. Alex said they were planning on working with the guidance department on recruitment. After seeing all the classes that he and Rathanak visited, there's a lot of potential and it may be that the students are simply nervous to take an Advanced Placement course. Alex agreed that students should be able to take AP courses online for what we can't offer at the high school, but not to replace what we currently offer with online courses. He said he took an online course and received 5 points on his GPA and he didn't feel that it was rigorous enough to warrant 5 points on his GPA. He said he would be willing to give those points back to prove that point. Mr. Dubois thanked Alex, Rathanak and Tara for a top-notch presentation. He thinks that we don't reward the good students like we should and concentrate all kinds of funds on the BD, special needs, and disadvantaged students. "It's time we reward the good students that we have and I wish you well," said Dubois. "We have students that excel in music, but now we have gone back to the basics for them and those programs can't be taught online. It doesn't mean that if the enrollment isn't there next year, we won't offer these courses. Mt. St. Charles had two students take two of our online AP courses because they wouldn't have a class with two students in it," said Mrs. Forcier. "We have over 230 teachers on lay-off so we need to do something soon. Once we tell the high school what the limit is, we can move forward. The enrollment numbers I have are from a week ago. Those numbers could have gone up by now," said Dr. Gerardi.

Motion to approve Dr. Gerardi's recommendation that a class size minimum for AP courses be set at 10: E. Nadeau
2nd: V. Phongsavanh

Motion to amend that if an AP course has less than 10 enrolled that those students be allowed to take that AP class within their honors class as an independent study: L. Majewski

2nd: V. Phongsavanh

Roll Call Vote: 3 no – 2 yes (EN/VP)
MOTION FAILS.

Mr. Dubois said he doesn't want kids that sign up for a class that won't run because there's 8 or 9 students to be denied the opportunity.

Motion to set a class size minimum of 15: A. Forcier

2nd: No second. Motion dies.

NO MINIMUM WILL BE REQUIRED FOR AP CLASSES TO RUN.

2. Amendments to Readiness to Learn Policy – P4-15: V. Phongsavanh

Ms. Phongsavanh said she was at a conference and heard that we might face a lawsuit from the ACLU, but requested that this item be tabled for this evening.

Motion to table: V. Phongsavanh

2nd: A. Forcier (Unanimously Approved)

3. Approval of Attendance Policy (P4-15.1) 1st Passage: M. Garceau, V. Phongsavanh

Mr. Garceau reported that a group of educators started meeting in September to review our attendance policy and looked at the policies of other communities. He gave an overview of the policy that was being presented this evening. He noted that notification procedures, definitions, actual school day, excused absences, and penalties. Ms. Phongsavanh thanked Mr. Garceau and School Improvement Team for putting a great policy together. Mrs. Majewski thinks there's a big discrepancy between the high school and middle school policy and that they should more aligned with each other. It needs to be changed before she will approve it. Garceau explained that he wanted to let the educators at the separate levels address the policy for their level. He feels that this policy will have the most impact on the "fringy" kids. There isn't a lot they can use to keep them in school other than the disincentives. Mrs. Nadeau agreed with Mrs. Majewski regarding the middle school policy. She thinks the attitude needs to change because the kids aren't prepared for high school. "One of the major complaints of 9th grade teachers is that the kids aren't prepared for high school. With this middle school concept, it has changed. Before, the 9th graders were the big cheeses and ready to get to the high school," said Nadeau. Mrs. Majewski felt that we need to identify how many days out are required before a referral to Family Court for truancy is made. She thinks that number should be included in the policy. Mr. Garceau stated that 10 absences is the minimum number of absences before a referral can be made. We aren't allowed to send students with less than 10 absences. Mrs. Forcier questioned absences for family emergencies and who determines that. Mr. Garceau said that it would have to be done on a case-by-case basis if it's a commonplace occurrence.

Motion to approve for 1st Passage: E. Nadeau
Roll Call Vote: 5 yes.

2nd: L. Majewski
APPROVED

CONFERENCES: *None*

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi reported that Mayor Fontaine called him today to follow-up on a cost savings initiative that he discussed at our meeting on Thursday. The issue is that the employees of some school districts (including Woonsocket) pay into Social Security and other school districts do not. Because Woonsocket does, it is an extra \$2,000,000 expense that other districts do not have. After his investigation, he determined that this could not be reversed based on Social Security regulations. However, he was talking to the Executive Director of the RI School Committee Association, Mr. Tim Duffy, and they have been investigating the need to pay into social security for part time employees. The Mayor recommended that Mrs. Busby investigate this matter with Mr. Duffy and she is in the process of doing so. Gerardi announced that the Collage concert is tomorrow night at WHS at 7:00pm. Also, Kindergarten registrations are being taken at each child's home school for children who are entering Kindergarten in the fall. Children must be age 5 by September 1st. Parents must bring proof of residency, birth certificate and immunization records to register their child. Gerardi announced that there are two upcoming Kindergarten Orientation nights. One will be held at Governor Pothier School on Monday, June 7th at 6:00pm for students entering Governor Pothier and Leo A. Savoie School and the other on Wednesday, June 9th at 6:00pm at Globe Park School for all students entering Globe, Harris, Fifth Avenue and Bernon Heights. He reminded parents to be sure to bring proof of residency, birth certificates and immunizations records if they plan on registering their child that evening. Gerardi reported that he was at his bank at lunchtime today and talking to one of the bankers about the financial situation that the Woonsocket Education Department finds itself in. Gerardi described it as "we are fighting the good fight on behalf of our students." The bank employee asked him if he knew where that quote originated from. He informed Gerardi that it's from the Bible, Timothy 6:10 and Timothy 6:12 and pulled a bible from out of his desk to show him. Dr. Gerardi believes that this

school committee is fighting the good fight on behalf of the children of Woonsocket and he appreciates our citizens making these kinds of biblical references.

Motion to receive and place on file: A. Forcier

2nd: E. Nadeau (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

V. Phongsavanh: Thanked the students that came and presented in support of the AP courses. Said she went to the Induction Ceremony for the Honor Society and congratulated all of the students. Spoke about the information she received from Kids Count.

M. Dubois: Congratulated those involved in the Induction Ceremony, adding that the numbers were really high this year and everyone did a great job. Asked Dr. Gerardi to see how much money we have spent in out-of-district placements this year sometime during the summer. Thanked the AP students who presented and congratulated them.

L. Majewski: Congratulated the Honor Society, saying they are great students. She is looking forward to the Collage Concert. Thanked the music department for the free tickets. Congratulated the theatre arts department on their performance of Grease. She asked that we have a forum with college students who come home on break to see how well they were prepared for college. "Some type of senior get-together in January might be good." She said she got a few calls this week from middle school parents about their children being given placement exams and wanted to know more about what these exams are being used for. She announced that Class Day is June 16th at 9 a.m. Majewski also asked Dr. Gerardi to remind principals to send the uniform policy home with report cards, attached to kindergarten registrations and put on school marquis. She suggested that the WSC members wear the uniform for the last meeting in June so that everyone can see what they will look like. "We tabled something about the Readiness to Learn Policy tonight. I was taken aback to find out that it has been challenged."

A Forcier: Congratulated all the students for their great work. She was invited to the middle school for Career Day and got to hand out new uniform shirts with Lisa Baldelli-Hunt. "As far as the ACLU, it's not the first time we have heard their complaints. When we went to the State House, they were there. We will just have to see where it goes. A lot of parents are confused about the uniforms. They want to know where they get them. Globe Park has already taken orders. Just because we sent letter out to Walmart and Burlington Coat Factory, it doesn't mean they are going to carry them. JC Penny will give 10% back to the PTOs I found out. We are going to have thousands of kids looking for uniforms and not all of them have cars to get to the mall. They go to Walmart and Burlington." She wants the information forwarded to parents about JC Penny. Forcier said she knows first-hand how difficult it can be to find uniforms from her experience with the Redskins and doesn't want kids to be penalized in September because Walmart didn't carry enough. She went to the State House regarding the fair funding formula and saw Alex there. Forcier said she never got a chance to testify because they pick who gets a chance to be heard. It doesn't matter who got there first. "I am being told that RIDE's formula will pass. Hopefully, they will be voting on it this week. It looks like AP classes will be saved for next year and we will be running classes with 3 or 4 students in them."

E. Nadeau: "Weren't we going to send vendor lists to parents?" asked Nadeau. Mrs. Majewski said that it's going to be on the back of the letters that go home. Nadeau said she missed Honors Night because she was at Morin Heights speaking to parents and grandparents about our new dress code. She said there were no problems with the reception of it there. Friday night she attended the time capsule opening, adding that she was working there at the time it was put there. She's sure she will miss the next one in 25 years. "I fully realize the financial situation in the City. I live here and hear about it every time I go to the market. Every decision I make is for what is the best interest of the kids." She spoke about her granddaughter who was graduating from all-day kindergarten and can read and do Math. "Every kid in there could. I have seen first-hand what that means to children. About the AP class minimum, I voted for 10, but I am thrilled that there will be no minimum because I see what we spend on all the other lower level and BD students."

Motion to adjourn at 10:15 p.m.: A. Forcier

2nd: L. Majewski (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary