

MINUTES
WOONSOCKET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22, 2011
7:15 PM – OPEN SESSION
Woonsocket Middle School @ Hamlet
60 Florence Drive, Woonsocket, RI 02895

Call to Order by Mr. Dubois.
Moment of Silence
Pledge of Allegiance

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

GLOBE PARK PLAYGROUND PRESENTATION: Jessica Frechette

Ms. Frechette presented a slideshow of the work that took place at Globe Park Elementary School to install a handicapped-accessible playground there. The finished product was shown and Mr. Dubois and Ms. Frechette thanked everyone who was involved in making it possible.

CONFERENCE: Field Trip Request for Kilgali, Rwanda Africa from Jason Marzini, WACTC Digital Media Teacher, WHS Interact Club Advisor (Item was taken out of order.)

Mr. Marzini explained the purpose of this field trip request as being part of a proposal to implement the Global Citizenship Program at Woonsocket High School in conjunction with the English and Social Studies Departments and the WHS Interact Club. It would be a credit-bearing, year-long academic program connecting WHS students with students at Harwood Union High School in Vermont and students in Kigali, Rwanda. Marzini noted that Harwood Union High School has been doing this for nearly 10 years and worked with the WHS Interact Club to hold an assembly for WHS students in December 2010 to educate them about the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The assembly featured students from Harwood High's Rwanda Program, who had recently made an educational trip to Africa. A grant from the Rotary Club allowed the group to host Valentina Irabagiza, a Rwandan genocide survivor, who shared her experiences at the assembly. Marzini noted what an incredible learning opportunity this would be for students in the Interact Club. It would cost \$3,000 for each student to participate in the trip and they would be involved in fundraising through corporate sponsorships for the funding of this trip. The Woonsocket Rotary would also provide funds for the trip. Mr. Dubois was very impressed with the packet and DVD that Mr. Marzini provided for each school committee member. Mr. Marzini told them there would be 5 to 10 students attending the trip along with 4 to 5 chaperones and no school funds would be used. Mr. Dubois said he strongly supported this request. Mrs. Nadeau was concerned about safety in a foreign country with civil unrest. Marzini acknowledged her concern and reported that the World Trade Organization has deemed this place as a safe place to do business. "There are no travel advisories against going to this country. You can put yourself on a Google list to get daily updates if you wish to do so. There are no real problems there right now to be concerned with. Harwood High students have gone there for the past 7 years and have never had an issue," reported Marzini. "How do these students raise \$3,000 each for this trip?" asked Nadeau. "Fundraisers, corporate sponsorships and their families pay the rest. The Woonsocket Rotary Club has committed funds also. The 11th and 12th grade students would be encouraged to participate," said Marzini. Ms. Phongsavanh thought this would be a great experience for our students, who sometimes forget the opportunities they have in this country and they will learn a lot. She pledged 10% of her yearly school committee stipend towards this trip.

Motion to approve field trip: V. Phongsavanh	2nd: M. Dubois
Roll Call Vote: 2 yes – 2 no (EN/LM)	MOTION FAILS.

Mr. Dubois suggested that Mr. Marzini present this again before the full five-member committee at the next meeting.

PUBLIC GOOD & WELFARE:

Donna Houle, School Success Coalition: Announced that the grant is coming to an end on June 30th. Their last meeting is on the 30th and she invited everyone to participate. It will be held at 4:30 p.m. at Family Resources and a light dinner and child care will be provided.

John McLaughlin, So. Main Street, Woonsocket: He thanked Dr. Gerardi for coming to Woonsocket. "He has been here through some difficult times and has handled himself well when people attacked him. You are in a city that doesn't put a lot of money into education. You fought very hard for every penny you could get. You are one of the best superintendents I have seen here in a long time." McLaughlin thanked the school committee for selecting him and wished him good luck. "There are a lot of people in this city that respect you. Don't listen to the people on Talk Radio. There is a large, silent majority in this city. I hope that you will confer with the new superintendent to keep the ship moving in the right direction." Dr. Gerardi thanked him for the kind words, saying he has made a lot of friends in Woonsocket and appreciates the support. "Hopefully we have laid a great foundation for the next superintendent to build on," said Gerardi.

RECOGNITIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS: Dr. Robert Gerardi

Gerardi congratulated the "Class of 2011" for their outstanding year, as well as Julie Briere, Valedictorian, and to Jennifer Pierel, Salutatorian. He noted that Julie plans on attending Providence College in the fall and majoring in biology and pre-med. Jennifer plans to attend Rhode Island College in the honors program in the fall majoring in the theater arts program. Gerardi congratulated the 8th Annual Power of the Pen Award Recipients from Woonsocket Public Schools. WMS @ Hamlet winners were Caden Unwin, Jaziah Candelario, Katarzyna Kozotek, Aliana Holmes, Jonathan Benoit, Jasmine Beausoleil, Jose Ocasio, Justin Lopez. The Woonsocket High School award winners were Jordan Fassell, and Chrystal Pane. Dr. Gerardi thanked the "Playground Committee" at Globe Park for their hard work on the playground at Globe, including: Jessica Frechette, Special Educator & Chairperson of the Playground Committee; Robert Desrosiers, Principal Globe Park; Carole Lerner, Special Education Director; Kenny Duva, Assistant Special Education Director; Michelle Boivin, Paraprofessional; Diane Vachon, Classroom Nurse; Sarah-Lynn St.Vincent, Occupational Therapist; Betty Quinn-Lacroix, Physical Therapist; Marie Curci, 1st grade teacher; Natasha Laplante, 5th grade teacher; Diana McPherson, School Nurse Teacher and Peter Fontaine, Director of Facilities. Gerardi congratulated Governor Pothier School for holding their reading parade last Friday to get students excited and prepared for "Summer Reading." Teachers and students participated in the parade and teacher Joanna Iarussi dressed up as a pirate from the book, "How I became a Pirate." On behalf of Principal Donna Coderre and the staff at Governor Pothier School, Dr. Gerardi thanked the Woonsocket High School ROTC, the fire and police departments, and the reading teachers from the school for planning and carrying out this wonderful event. Gerardi reported that the Woonsocket High School Jr. ROTC participated in a Flag Day folding ceremony at Leo A. Savoie School on Tuesday, June 14th. The Jr. ROTC demonstrated how to fold the flag and the meaning of every fold. He thanked the ROTC for their participation and hard work. He also recognized Robert J. Stewart for nominating the WED for the 2011 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. The WED was awarded the RI 2011 Freedom Award for public sector employers. He displayed the plaque and thanked Robert Stewart for serving our country and protecting our freedom and had him stand to be recognized.

Motion to receive and place on file: E. Nadeau

2nd: L. Majewski (Unanimously Approved)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 8, 2011 OPEN/CLOSED; May 25, 2011 OPEN/CLOSED

Motion to approve: V. Phongsavanh

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion to approve Consent Agenda: E. Nadeau

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Personnel Actions

Certified Appointments/Non-Certified Appointments

2. Purchases/Transfers Over \$2,000

Heinemann/Ed. Supplies/Elementary/Title I Grant
Keystone Information Systems, Inc./Annual Contract/Business Office/Local
RI Association of School Committees/Dues/SC/Local
Stericycle/Hazardous Waste Removal/Facilities/Local

3. Field Trip/Conference Requests

RIDE NECAP Review Committee/Portland, ME/WMS, Hamlet/RIDE Funding

4. Home Schooling Requests

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

COMMUNICATIONS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Mrs. Majewski reported that the Curriculum Committee was scheduled to meet on June 20th, but they have rescheduled that meeting to sometime during the summer. She said she would give the Superintendent Search Committee report under tonight's agenda item.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS

1. BID AWARD: #11-15 Elementary Science Kits for Special Education

Mrs. Majewski asked how many kits we are ordering. Kathie DiModica told her that enough kits for every self-contained classroom are being ordered—18 kits. "We didn't have the money to order them before and this is so that they can have the same opportunity as regular education students have," explained DiModica.

Motion to approve: E. Nadeau
Roll Call Vote: 4 yes

2nd: M. Dubois
APPROVED

2. Appointment of Interim Superintendent- L. Majewski, E. Nadeau

Mrs. Nadeau announced that they have a candidate for appointment tonight that has accepted the terms of this position—Dr. Colette Traylor. Her resume' and the terms of her employment were included in each school committee member's packet. Mrs. Nadeau read the terms of employment for the public and noted that Mrs. Majewski had spoken to Dr. Traylor about these conditions, which Traylor accepted. Nadeau explained that the first Interim Superintendent candidate declined the position to accept a year-long position in Providence at a very good rate. Mrs. Majewski added that she spoke with Dr. Traylor at length over the weekend. Majewski noted the work experience and qualifications of Dr. Traylor for the public, noting that she had been Superintendent of Schools in Lincoln, RI, from 1991-1996; Superintendent of Schools in Sprague, CT, from 1996-1999; School Superintendent in Provincetown, MA from 2001-2006, and is currently Interim School Superintendent in Thompson, CT, public schools. Ms. Phongsavanh thanked the subcommittee for providing the resume and confirming that Dr. Traylor is available, but she still would not support her appointment because she feels that Mr. Garceau could fill in as interim superintendent and save money. Phongsavanh feels that it may take longer than two months to find a permanent person. Majewski said that their intentions are to have someone permanent in place as soon as possible. "With Lusi, it was just over a period of a few days where she was offered the other position," she noted. Mrs. Nadeau said that when they hired Dr. Gerardi, he had to give a 60-day notice and that is one reason the appointment and filling of the position can be thrown off. "We have posted internally and externally on various sites for this position. The deadline will be July 7th for applications and then we will start the interviewing process. We will be contacting people to be on the Search Committee and alternates as well since it's being done during the summer and people have vacations planned and may be out of town. We are in the process of contacting the Search Committee members and are doing our best to have all entities represented. We can't honor every request we receive because we would have a committee of 50 or 60 people. "What are the criteria in order to be on this committee?" asked Phongsavanh. "There will be administrators, principals, community leaders, union representation, parents, etc.," said Majewski. "How do you pick who makes the cut to be on the committee?" asked Phongsavanh. "There are a number of factors," said Majewski.

Motion to approve the appointment of Dr. Colette Traylor as Interim Superintendent: E. Nadeau
2nd: L. Majewski
APPROVED
Roll Call Vote: 3 yes – 1 no (VP)

3. Change in Readiness Policy 1st Passage – L. Majewski

Mrs. Majewski reported that the Uniform Committee is presenting a revised Readiness Policy for first passage tonight to include walking shorts and Capri pants for girls, as well as black shirts (polo or Tee's without writing and properly fitted). Sweatshirts that are maroon, gray or black without zippers or hoods, pockets or writing unless it is school-related may be worn over a uniform shirt if conditions warrant it. "So there's no addition to the consequences?" asked Ms. Phongsavanh. Mrs. Majewski believes that adding the walking shorts, Capri pants and black shirts will

help with the compliance issues. She thinks the dress code was enforced, but the consequences aren't public. "It's a private matter. The perception may be that it's not being enforced, but people don't always see the punishment," said Majewski. "We can still enforce the policy, but we can't kick students out of school for not complying like a private school can. I have been assured by Mr. Garceau that the principals enforce the dress code," said Gerardi. Majewski said, "We have an attendance policy, but we still have an attendance problem. We do our best to enforce it, but it still happens."

Motion to approve the amended policy for 1st passage: E. Nadeau
2nd: L. Majewski **Roll Call Vote: 4 yes APPROVED**

4. WMS Promotion Policy – 1st Passage – P. McGee

Dr. McGee went over the proposed changes to the promotion policy for the middle school. He explained the changes that were made five years ago and increasing the standards. McGee explained that students currently need a total of 4.5 credits per academic year to be promoted and pass math, English and one other core class (science or social studies) for a total of 3 credits per academic year. They must also receive 1.5 additional credits from the remaining academic subjects, including Encore, health, physical education and reading. If they do not attain 4.5 credits, they may have the option of attending summer school at the parents' expense. Students now have the opportunity to use NovaNet to help make up credits that they need to be promoted. The proposed changes would be that students must pass each of the four core subjects to be promoted and receive 5¼ credits per academic year. Students must pass English, math, science and social studies for a total of 4 credits. They must also receive at least 1¼ additional credits from the remaining academic subjects. "This is also an attempt to help strengthen students so they will be prepared to pass every subject when they get to the high school with the new graduation requirements. We changed the passing grade at the high school, but have not yet done that at the middle school. We will discuss it during the summer and come back with an amendment to make them more aligned," explained Mrs. Majewski. "After a year of the dress code, has the compliance been steady?" Mrs. Nadeau asked Dr. McGee. "At the beginning of the year, it was probably about 90% compliance. For students that weren't complying, we called parents and followed the code consequences. During the year, percentage of compliance decreased. I don't know why. I am disappointed with it. I think that it would be helpful for principals, assistant principals and staff in the central office to find out why this is happening, because my feeling is that we will start the next school year like we ended this school year," said McGee. "Along with consequences, the staff has to talk to students about it and ask why they aren't complying," said Nadeau. Dr. McGee said he would like to have them involved also. "We did have students at the beginning of the year with parents that didn't have the resources and uniforms were provided for them," said McGee. "Those are the kinds of things we need to know so we can work on it. Do you find that you have sent kids home if they are improperly dressed?" asked Nadeau. McGee said that they will contact the parents and ask them to bring the child the appropriate uniform. "Sometimes the students leave home with the uniform on and they arrive without it. We don't send them home because God forbid something happens along the way," said McGee. "I have seen Catholic school girls come out of school and roll up their skirts!" said Nadeau.

Motion to approve the amended policy for 1st passage: V. Phongsavanh
2nd: E. Nadeau **Roll Call Vote: 4 yes APPROVED**

5. WMS Handbook – 1st Passage – P. McGee

Dr. McGee presented the list of pages that would be changed with additions or deletions and asked if the committee had any questions. Mrs. Majewski asked why NECAP testing was moved to the first criteria on Page 5 under Academic Placement. Dr. McGee explained that there is a series of five criteria. "When we look at placing students on accelerated teams, we look at the NECAP scores. It doesn't mean we don't take the other criteria into consideration also. "The NECAP is a picture in time. I think that what students do every day in the classroom and what the teachers see is a better way of determining what students should be in accelerated classes," said Majewski. "We have students who do achieve a 4 and their performance is pretty close to what they are doing in the classroom and the teacher's recommendation. Although it's listed first, we still weigh the other criteria," explained McGee. "Parents and students were allowed to take an advanced placement class and a student was allowed to take a Human Physiology class. The teacher comments said that, at first glance, they thought this student would be over their head in this class. However, the student was very successful because he persevered," noted Mrs. Majewski.

Motion to approve the WMS 2011-2012 Student/Parent Handbook for 1st passage: E. Nadeau
2nd: L. Majewski **Roll Call Vote: 4 yes APPROVED**

6. WHS Handbook – 1st Passage- S. Porricelli

Mr. Porricelli presented the proposed changes and asked if anyone had questions. Mrs. Majewski reported that the Curriculum Committee did work on this handbook side-by-side with Mr. Porricelli.

Motion to approve the WHS 2011-2012 Student/Parent Handbook for 1st passage: L. Majewski 2nd: E. Nadeau	Roll Call Vote: 4 yes APPROVED
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7. Elementary Handbook- 1st Passage – M. Garceau

Mr. Mark Garceau presented the proposed 2011-2011 Elementary Student/Parent Handbook for approval. Mrs. Majewski noted the addition of "Transportation is considered a related service under IDEA" on Page 5. She would like a copy of those services and asked Mr. Garceau for it.

Motion to approve the Elementary 2011-2012 Student/Parent Handbook for 1st passage: E. Nadeau 2nd: L. Majewski/V. Phongsavanh	Roll Call Vote: 4 yes APPROVED
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SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Dr. Gerardi

Dr. Gerardi thanked the school committee for their support over the last three years and in the future. He acknowledged that these three years were physically draining but they have accomplished a lot of positive things while dealing with the most challenging financial times since the Great Depression. Gerardi also thanked the Administration, Teachers, and staff of the WED, saying that without them, all of this would not have been possible. When he began writing the Education Spotlight on patch.com, it was exhilarating for him to be able to validate all of the good work by everyone in the schools. Dr. Gerardi also thanked all of the Community-Based Organizations for their desire to partner with the schools and the collaborative relationships they have built. He's certain that the future of this collaborative effort will continue on because it has become the norm in Woonsocket and not the exception. Finally, he thanked the parents and students that make up the Woonsocket School Community. He acknowledged the PAC for improving communication with our families and supporting the fight for a better education program than just the Basic Education Plan. "We all know that the financial battles are not over, and I hope that the School Community will carry that torch until the WED and student programs are funded properly from all sources," he said. He wished everyone a safe summer vacation and good luck with the new school year!

Motion to receive and place on file: E. Nadeau

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOOD & WELFARE:

E. Nadeau: She thanked Jessica Frechette and the team of volunteers who built the playground at Globe Park. "It's awesome and shows how the community can come together for good." She attended both graduation ceremonies at the middle schools today and wished all the young people well as she did at the high school last week. "We have some darn good kids in our schools!" She wished Dr. Gerardi well. When she ends her term, she will have served for ten years altogether on the school committee. "I have worked with many superintendents and Dr. Gerardi gets an A+. He has never lied to me or misled me. We were very lucky to have him during the horrible years we have been through. I hope we can get a replacement that is at least as close to him as possible because those kinds of people are very hard to find. It has been a pleasure."

V. Phongsavanh: She presented the WED with a plaque from the Woonsocket Prevention Coalition for its support of their programs over the years. She congratulated the Class of 2011. "It's good to see students graduate and give back to their community. Mrs. Forcier was unable to be here because her daughter graduated today from the WMS and they are having a family celebration. She wanted me to report that next year there will be a cut in the state funding formula and she wanted to make sure everyone knows that." Phongsavanh thanked Dr. Gerardi for the great job and wished him well.

M. Dubois: He congratulated the grads of 2011, saying it was too bad it had to be held inside. "It's always tough with rain predicted and you have to make a decision with four hours to go. You can't control the weather and everything went well." He thanked everyone involved in setting up for it. Dubois wished Dr. Gerardi well, saying he is the third superintendent he has worked with on this school committee. "He is by far the hardest worker I know. He works all hours of the night, weekends, holidays, you name it. I know because I get his emails and phone calls. He is not a political person. It didn't bother him to get up and advocate for fair funding and for our district. He has very

strong negotiating skills. He is very visible. We have had superintendents in the past that the only time they would leave McFee was when they would get a free meal! It really impressed me when I found out that Dr. Gerardi went to the high school to talk to the students who were here at the school committee meeting protesting the six-period day. He knew they would be bitter, but did the right thing.”

L. Majewski: She congratulated the School Success Coalition for three successful years and highlighted some of their activities during that time and issues they have tackled. She thanked all the members of the group. Majewski congratulated all the people involved in the Globe Park Playground installation. She thanked Jessica Frechette and Carole Lerner for all their hard work towards this project. Majewski congratulated the Class of 2011 and the 8th Graders moving up to the high school. She wished them all well and asked the high school grads to come back and serve the city. Majewski praised Dr. Gerardi’s uncompromised work ethic. “He and Stacey work very long hours. I have never seen anyone work like that. He is a person of integrity. We could trust him. He builds bridges—not walls. He believes in parents. When we did waivers for uniforms, Dr. Gerardi called every parent personally.” She wished him good luck and said he will be missed.

Motion to adjourn at 9:00 p.m.: E. Nadeau

2nd: M. Dubois (Unanimously Approved)

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy G. Belisle, WSC Recording Secretary