

WINDHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION
WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
April 25, 2012

BOARD PRESENT: Chair Dr. Sewall, Vice-chair Mrs. Collins, Ms. Tinker, Mr. Adamo, Mr. French, Mrs. Lambert, Dr. Switchenko

BOARD ABSENT: Mrs. Osuba, Mr. Desaulniers

ADMINISTRATION

PRESENT: Superintendent Ms. Ortiz, Assistant Superintendent Ms. Barker-Jones, Directors Mrs. Banks and Mr. Nelson

STUDENT

REPRESENTATIVES: Hossai Jabary, Katelynn Person

OTHERS PRESENT: Special Master Dr. Adamowski; general public; staff; administrators; news media

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dr. Sewall called the April 25, 2012, Board of Education Workshop meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. in the Windham High School Library Media Center.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Adamo led the Board and the public in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Dr. Sewall announced that the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology completed the installation of computers donated by Travelers into a new computer lab located in the Windham High School Library.

He also announced that the Superintendent and he will hold open office hours next Monday at the Windham Heights Learning Center from 6:30 PM to 8 PM.

WORKSHOP SESSION

Strategic Operating Plan (SOP)

Dr. Adamowski began tonight's workshop session by providing a brief overview of the steps that have led to the development of the three- year Strategic Operating Plan (SOP). Work began in the fall to develop the vision, the theory of action, the measures, the six goals and thirty major strategies. Development of the 150 – 200 implementation steps of the thirty strategies is the final stage of the plan. The proposal requires State Board of Education (SBOE) approval and Dr. Adamowski will present it to the SBOE at its first meeting in June; however, he is uncertain if they will act on it at that time. The Windham Board of Education will adopt the plan which will be used during the summer retreat each year as the Board reviews student achievement and data from the previous year. At that time, the Board may find it necessary to make some revisions to the plan so that it continues to effectively work as a framework guiding the Board as it reviews district priorities, use of staff energy and budget expenditures. Tonight Ms. Ortiz will present the first three sections of the plan with the final three sections presented in May. Dr. Adamowski asked that the Board hold its business meeting on May 23 and its workshop meeting on May 9 so that all six sections are presented to the members in a timely manner.

At tonight's meeting, Ms. Ortiz reviewed the strategies and implementation steps of Goals I, II, and III of the plan. She will review the strategies and implementation steps of Goals IV, V and VI at the next meeting

in May. There are a varied number of strategies comprised of many implementation steps within each of the six goals. Tonight's workshop meeting reviewed the following: Goal I: Create a Portfolio of High Performing Effective Schools, which is comprised of eight strategies; Goal II: Improve Teacher and Leader Quality and Retention, which is comprised of four strategies; and Goal III: Remove Barriers to Low Performance, which is comprised of four strategies. Each implementation step within the three goals and the many strategies were reviewed. Throughout the meeting, there was discussion and questions were answered regarding the strategies and implementation steps of the first three goals of the proposed SOP.

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Mary Gallucci, Willimantic, said that Goal III is phrased in the opposite way that it is meant; therefore, if barriers are removed to low performance, low performance is encouraged. She also said that creating a Montessori school at Windham Center School, which is the smallest school in the district, and making it an intradistrict choice contradicts creating a neighborhood school model. Ms. Gallucci said that TFA teachers won't be able to teach there because special training is required for Montessori teachers. She suggested also that the actual evidence concerning Charter schools be reviewed as it shows that there are fewer ELL students, fewer or no special education students and graduation rates at these schools are dismal. Given the number of job openings in the district, she asked how Goal II would be implemented and how teacher retention rates would improve by hiring twenty new TFA recruits each year? She said that she had unanswered questions from the last meeting: Is EASTCONN going to be handed the preK – grade eight magnet school and is there special consideration for TFA teachers if there is a reduction of staff per the contracts they receive? Dr. Sewall said that TFA teachers will not have special consideration if there is a reduction of staff, and Dr. Adamowski explained that per contract in the district, reduction in force is done by seniority process within the area of certification. Dr. Adamowski also explained that Windham Center School is at or near capacity and the school is too small to be viable from a budgetary and capacity standpoint. He said that there are many options that could be considered for Windham Center School.

Jerome Perry, Willimantic, spoke about the redesign of Windham Middle School and asked the Board to consider parent involvement and class sizes. He said that students like routine and there will be many changes at the Middle School next year. Mr. Perry said there are a lot of dynamics in Willimantic regarding the language barrier that affect parent involvement. He said that Windham doesn't have budget resources. He quoted a news article that listed Windham as having the lowest voter turnout in the state. Mr. Perry said that research shows that parent involvement is necessary to have effective schools. He is requesting smaller classes and more teachers to help assist students in order to increase achievement. Ms. Ortiz said that class size is being reviewed by a committee. Dr. Sewall and Ms. Ortiz explained that family liaisons who speak Spanish have been placed in all of the schools to work with families. Dr. Adamowski explained that much of the redesign work at the Middle School is directed toward having reasonable class sizes. Ms. Ortiz also said that the language barrier is being addressed by hiring more ELL teachers to support students and providing additional programs for parents. Goal IV of the Strategic Operating Plan focuses on increasing parent involvement and will be reviewed at the next Board meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

**Motion by Mr. Adamo, seconded by Mrs. Lambert, that the Board adjourn its meeting at 9:28 P.M.
On the motion: Aye, 7-0; unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Murphy Sewall, Chair